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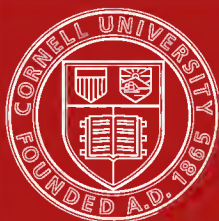
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Certain principles in Evanson's "Dissona



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*Certain Principles in Evanson's "Dissonance of the
"Four generally received Evangelists," &c.
examined*

IN

EIGHT DISCOURSES

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY'S,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCX.

AT

THE LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY

THOMAS FALCONER, A.M.

OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD.

OXFORD,

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J. UPHAM, Bath.

1811.

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TO
THE REV. W. WHITEHALL DAVIES,
OF
BROUGHTON, FLINTSHIRE,
I INSCRIBE
THIS VOLUME
AS
A MEMORIAL
OF
ENDURING FRIENDSHIP.

T. F.

BATH,
March 17, 1811.

P R E F A C E.

PERHAPS an obscure student of the history of religious controversies may be somewhere found, who will not think the information unnecessary, that a book entitled “The Diffonance of the Four generally received Evangelists, &c. by the Rev. E. Evanfon,” which suggested the principal subjects of discussion in the following Lectures, was first published in the year 1792; that Dr. Priestley, in the year 1793, replied to this work in “Letters to a Young Man;” that Mr. E. addressed “A Letter to Dr. Priestley’s Young Man” in the following year, and in a Postscript adverted on another opponent, the Rev. D. Simpson; that a second edition of “The Diffonance” was published in 1805; that the doctrines and principles and arguments of

“The Diffonance” were still neglected by the established Clergy, with the exception of Mr. Simpson, till some of these were repeated (and they were merely repeated) in a Visitation Sermon at Danbury in 1806, when this Sermon was examined in certain anonymous “Strictures,” and also in a most able Letter to the author, the Rev. F. Stone, A. M. by the Rev. E. Nares, Rector of Biddenden; and lastly, that in 1807 a Canon of the New Testament was published, according to the selection of Mr. Evanson in his “Diffonance.” It is somewhat remarkable, that an attempt, like Mr. E’s, to annul the testimony of the ancient Christians, as Christians, to the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels, did not excite more solicitude and exertion. This work had engaged my attention soon after its first publication, and at an early period of my life; and when I resumed this occupation, I found that the remains of this controversial essay contained arguments which I had no occasion to strengthen, and were written in a style which I could not subsequently improve. I did not pursue the enquiry at that time, because I daily expected that more experienced controversialists would

appear in the field with armour of proof^a. Mr. E. might have considered himself as fortunate that he was not opposed by the late Bishop of Clonfert, (the pious, the learned, and the suffering Christian,) who was of opinion, that this sophistical book should be examined and answered. Whilst I thus state to advantage the importance of the object of my own labours, the reader will sympathize in my regret, that what was thought worthy the powers of his mind was attempted by any other.

It is necessary to remark, that the Discourse on the Greek language was finished several months before the publication of a disquisition on a part of the same subject in the "Herculanensia."

^a To guard against misrepresentation I wish to observe, that my Discourses comprise a much smaller extent of enquiry than Dr. Priestley's Letter, which contains a large proportion of very admirable argument; and, if I should not have my meaning distorted by a calumnious gang of local inquisitors and familiars, I would say, that what I have done may be considered as supplementary to the *orthodox parts* of Dr. Priestley's reply.

The Trustees of the late Canon Bampton's benefaction require each Candidate for the appointment to the Lecture to preach before the University within the year preceding the election. The Discourse on November 5, 1808, which is subjoined, is this probationary academical exercise.

I am obliged to the singular patience of more than one friend, who perused, oftener than once, nearly all the discourses in manuscript; and if I have adopted only some of their corrections, or inserted only some of their suggested additions, (which, if collected together, would not occupy the space of more than three or four pages at the utmost,) I admit that the work is thus rendered less perfect: but I wished as well to sustain alone the whole censure, as to lay an undivided claim to the whole of the approbation of the public. With respect to the Discourse on the fifth of November, as originally published, I am responsible for every sentiment and expression, and, with one exception, for every fact. I have been since reminded, that Archbishop Tillotson, in his sermon on the same

occasion, had preserved the curious information respecting Sir Everard Digby.

The subjects selected by the preachers of this Lecture, from the time of its institution, will shew, that the want of merit in the present Lectures, or in any that may soon follow, is not to be ascribed to the preoccupation of all the best topics by our predecessors.

I beg leave, in concluding, to explain the apparent neglect of preceding writers. I have been so studious, perhaps culpably studious, of originality, if not of novelty of reply, to many objections, that I forbore to consult other authors; and indeed, where I wished to have extrinsic aid, it was often more easy to invent an argument for the occasion, than to procure the book, to examine a reference, or to penetrate to the conclusion of a comment.

EXTRACT

FROM

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars
“ of the Univerfity of Oxford for ever, to have and
“ to hold all and fingular the faid Lands or Estates
“ upon truſt, and to the intents and purpoſes herein-
“ after mentioned ; that is to ſay, I will and appoint
“ that the Vice-Chancellor of the Univerfity of Ox-
“ ford for the time being ſhall take and receive all
“ the rents, iſſues, and profits thereof, and (after all
“ taxes, reparations, and neceſſary deductions made)
“ that he pay all the remainder to the endowment
“ of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be eſta-
“ bliſhed for ever in the ſaid Univerfity, and to be
“ performed in the manner following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the firſt Tueſ-
“ day in Eaſter Term, a Lecturer be yearly choſen

“ by the Heads of Colleges only, and by no others,
 “ in the room adjoining to the Printing-House,
 “ between the hours of ten in the morning and
 “ two in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St.
 “ Mary’s in Oxford, between the commencement
 “ of the last month in Lent Term, and the end of
 “ the third week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Di-
 “ vinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon
 “ either of the following Subjects—to confirm and
 “ establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all
 “ heretics and schismatics—upon the divine au-
 “ thority of the holy Scriptures—upon the autho-
 “ rity of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as
 “ to the faith and practice of the primitive Church
 “ —upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour
 “ Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy
 “ Ghost—upon the Articles of the Christian Faith,
 “ as comprehended in the Apostles’ and Nicene
 “ Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight
 “ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always print-
 “ ed, within two months after they are preached,
 “ and one copy shall be given to the Chancellor
 “ of the University, and one copy to the Head of
 “ every College, and one copy to the Mayor of the
 “ city of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the
 “ Bodleian Library ; and the expence of printing
 “ them shall be paid out of the revenue of the
 “ Land or Estates given for establishing the Divi-

“ nity Lecture Sermons ; and the Preacher shall
 “ not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, be-
 “ fore they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall
 “ be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
 “ mons, unless he hath taken the Degree of Master
 “ of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities
 “ of Oxford or Cambridge; and that the same per-
 “ son shall never preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
 “ mons twice.”

NAMES OF LECTURERS, &c.

1780. JAMES BANDINEL, D. D. of Jesus College ;
Public Orator of the University. The author
first establishes " the truth and authority of the
" Scriptures ;—for the authenticity of the his-
" tory being acknowledged, and the facts which
" are therein recorded being granted, the testi-
" mony of *miracles* and *prophecies*, joined to the
" *excellence of the doctrines*, is a clear and com-
" plete demonstration of our Saviour's divine
" commission." P. 37.
1781. Timothy Neve, D. D. Chaplain of Merton College.
" The great point which the author has prin-
" cipally attempted to illustrate is, that well
" known, but too much neglected truth, that
" Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and
" the Redeemer of mankind."
1782. Robert Holmes, M. A. Fellow of New College.
" On the prophecies and testimony of John the
" Baptist, and the parallel prophecies of Jesus
" Christ."
1783. John Cobb, D. D. Fellow of St. John's College.
The subjects discussed are ; " An inquiry after
" happiness ; natural religion ; the Gospel ; re-
" pentance ; faith ; professional faith ; practical
" faith ; the Christian's privileges."
1784. Joseph White, B. D. Fellow of Wadham College ;
" A comparison of Mahometism and Christia-
" nity in their history, their evidence, and their
" effects."

1785. Ralph Churton, M. A. Fellow of Brasenose College; "On the prophecies respecting the destruction of Jerusalem."
1786. George Croft, M. A. late Fellow of University College; "The use and abuse of reason; objections against inspiration considered; the authority of the ancient Fathers examined; on the conduct of the first Reformers; the charge of intolerance in the Church of England refuted; objections against the Liturgy answered; on the evils of separation; conjectural remarks upon prophecies to be fulfilled hereafter."
1787. William Hawkins, M. A. late Fellow of Pembroke College; "On Scripture Mysteries."
1788. Richard Shepherd, D. D. of Corpus Christi College; "The ground and credibility of the Christian Religion."
1789. Edward Tatham, D. D. of Lincoln College; "The Chart and Scale of Truth."
1790. Henry Kett, M. A. Fellow of Trinity College. "The object" of these Lectures is "to rectify the misrepresentations of Mr. Gibbon and Dr. Priestley with respect to the history of the primitive Church."
1791. Robert Morris, M. A. late Fellow of Brasenose College; On "faith in general; faith in divine testimony no subject of question; internal evidence of the Gospel; effects of faith; religious establishments; heresies."

1792. John Eveleigh, D. D. Provost of Oriel College.
 " I shall endeavour," says the learned author,
 " first to state regularly the substance of our
 " religion from its earliest declarations in the
 " Scriptures of both the Old and New Testa-
 " ment to its complete publication after the re-
 " surrection of Christ; secondly, to give a sketch
 " of the history of our religion from its com-
 " plete publication after the resurrection of
 " Christ to the present times, confining however
 " this sketch, towards the conclusion, to the
 " particular history of our own Church; thirdly,
 " to state in a summary manner the arguments
 " adducible in proof of the truth of our reli-
 " gion; and fourthly, to point out the general
 " sources of objection against it."
1793. James Williamson, B. D. of Queen's College;
 " The truth, inspiration, authority and evidence
 " of the Scriptures considered and defended."
1794. Thomas Wintle, B. D. of Pembroke College;
 " The expediency, prediction, and accomplish-
 " ment of the Christian redemption illustrated."
1795. Daniel Veyfie, B. D. Fellow of Oriel College;
 " The doctrine of Atonement illustrated and de-
 " fended."
1796. Robert Gray, M. A. late of St. Mary Hall; " On
 " the principles upon which the reformation of
 " the Church of England was established."
1797. William Finch, LL. D. late Fellow of St. John's
 College; " The objections of infidel historians
 " and other writers against Christianity confi-
 " dered."

1798. Charles Henry Hall, B. D. late Student of Christ Church. "It is the purpose of these discourses
"to consider at large what is meant by the
"scriptural expression, 'fulness of time;' or, in
"other words, to point out the previous steps
"by which God Almighty gradually prepared
"the way for the introduction and promulga-
"tion of the Gospel." See the Preface.
1799. William Barrow, LL.D. of Queen's College. These
Lectures contain "answers to some popular
"objections against the necessity or the credi-
"bility of the Christian revelation."
1800. George Richards, M. A. late Fellow of Oriel Col-
lege; "The divine origin of prophecy illustrated
"and defended."
1801. George Stanley Faber, M. A. Fellow of Lincoln
College; "Horæ Mosaicæ; or, a view of the
"Mosaic records with respect to their coin-
"cidence with profane antiquity, their internal
"credibility, and their connection with Chris-
"tianity."
1802. George Frederic Nott, B. D. Fellow of All Souls
College; "Religious Enthusiasm considered."
1803. John Farrer, M. A. of Queen's College; "On the
"mission and character of Christ, and on the
"Beatitudes."
1804. Richard Laurence, LL. D. of University College;
"An attempt to illustrate those Articles of the
"Church of England which the Calvinists im-
"properly consider as Calvinistical."

- 1805. Edward Nares, M. A. late Fellow of Merton College; "A view of the evidences of Christianity
"at the clofe of the pretended age of reason."

- 1806. John Browne, M. A. late Fellow of Corpus Christi College. In these Lectures the following principle is variously applied in the vindication of religion; that "there has been an infancy of
"the species, analogous to that of the individuals of whom it is composed, and that the
"infancy of human nature required a different
"mode of treatment from that which was suitable to its advanced state."

- 1807. Thomas Le Mesurier, M. A. late Fellow of New College; "The nature and guilt of Schism considered with a particular reference to the principles of the Reformation."

- 1808. John Penrose, M. A. of Corpus Christi College; "An attempt to prove the truth of Christianity
"from the wisdom displayed in its original establishment, and from the history of false and
"corrupted systems of religion."

- 1809. J. B. S. Carwithen, M. A. of St. Mary Hall; "A
"view of the Brahminical religion in its confirmation of the truth of the sacred history, and
"in its influence on the moral character."

SERMON I.

I COR. ii. 5.

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

SEVERAL eminent theological writers have suggested an hypothesis, that Providence selected the first teachers of Christianity from persons, not merely defective in attainments, but also in mental capacity. These writers do not indeed depreciate the use of human learning in the present time, but maintain, that neither learning nor human abilities were employed, as instruments of conversion, at the commencement of the ministry of the Apostles. The very possibility of the employment of liberal learning in this manner is excluded by the hypothesis, which supposes, that the first teachers of Christianity were not only destitute, but not even susceptible of improvement by education; that therefore they could not use, as means of propagating Christianity,

the secular wisdom, which they had not natural ability to acquire. They cannot indeed deny, that Paul and Apollos possessed both eloquence and learning; but they seem to be restrained by a superstitious reluctance from admitting, that these acquired qualifications were applied to the instruction of the primitive converts, lest perhaps they should appear to admit the necessity, or even useful concurrence, of these aids, as secondary causes, in advancing the progress of the Christian religion.

They, who suppose that St. Paul suspended the full exercise of his natural abilities, and circumscribed the display of his eloquence and learning, seem to imagine, that the use of such powers was injurious to the miraculous evidence of Christianity, as if those powers were not equally the gift of God, with any inspired faculties whatsoever. They also exclude, by this reasoning, the adaptation of means, already existing, to an end designed to be promoted; and forget, that the Almighty does not act by the intervention of miraculous endowments, when those bestowed by Him in the natural course of his bounty are adequate to the purposes of his wisdom. These purposes were equally manifested in the preaching and actions of the Apostle to the Gentiles,

to whatever source, whether to nature, or to inspiration, the means, by which these purposes were accomplished, are to be referred. It seems to be the object of such reasoners to deduce the wisdom of the Almighty from a total discrepancy and unfitness between the end, which was to be attained, and the means, which were to be employed. They would prove, that our Lord designedly preferred the twelve, as men not only of uncultivated, but of weak understandings. But if *all* those, who promulgated the Gospel to the world, were not persons of this description, the argument, which is derived from the insufficiency of the agent opposed to the greatness of the effect, is defective and illusory. No other standard is proposed of the imperfection of the capacities of the first teachers of the Gospel, besides "the erroneous views, which they formed of their Master's doctrine, intentions, and kingdom, when he was with them upon earth." How much soever they might misunderstand these subjects, the misconception of them was an error common to a great part of their nation, and could not so much be considered as a test of "natural incapacity," as a measure of their prejudices and passions, which superseded the exercise of their

reason. The splendid exception of St. Paul must subvert all speculations, which are founded upon the hypothesis, that the Almighty provided incompetent physical means in order to distinguish his own agency, as if His wisdom and power required the contrast of the wisdom and power of those, to whom He himself had not dispensed the ordinary measure of intellectual ability. In conformity with this unworthy theory we might have expected to see an illiterate Galilean miraculously enabled to reason, without premeditation, and even instantaneously, before the philosophic tribunal of Stoics and Epicureans, assembled at the Areopagus. But instead of such a sudden communication of knowledge, or inspiration of qualifications for the particular occasion, an eloquent and learned Jew of Tarsus was selected to be the Apostle of the eloquent and learned Gentiles. It is observed by the philosophical Greek ^ageographer of antiquity, that every kind of knowledge was cultivated with so much ardour at Tarsus, that it surpassed Athens and Alexandria, and every other

^a Strab. Geog. lib. xiv. p. 673. This passage has been often referred to ; but if I had been satisfied with the particulars usually cited, I should not have found the most curious part of the account.

seat of science that could be named, and that it differed from them all in this respect, that its learned men were all citizens, with a small intermixture of strangers; so that St. Paul might aver with propriety and truth, that he was “a citizen of no mean city.” When the inhabitants of Lystra applied to him the title of Mercury, “because he was “the chief speaker,” are we to understand that this appellation was descriptive of his eloquence, or simply intended to distinguish his speaking from the comparative silence of his associate? To the Jews he relates with justifiable satisfaction the advantages of the Jewish part of his education under Gamaliel, and in his orations at Athens and Cæsarea he does not hesitate to display the erudition of the schools of Tarsus.

This argument, drawn from the supposed defective capacities of the Apostles, has been still further extended, in contradiction to facts with an innocent and fanciful credulity, which may extenuate the imprudence of the author, but exposes Christianity to new objections. It has been said ^b, that if we compare “the excellence and sublimity of the doctrine and

^b See Maclaine's Answer to Soame Jenyns.

“ precepts of the Gospel, with the rank and “ capacities of its teachers, we then are “ brought into the sphere of miracles.” But the rank and capacity of St. Paul were much too great to present such a contrast. Excellence characterizes all the writings of this Apostle, and sublimity is not the casual ornament of a few passages only ; but in the proportion that his natural abilities exceeded those of the Galilean teachers, in the same degree do they shew the insufficiency of this standard of revelation. It would follow from this reasoning, that the more we degrade the intellectual abilities of the first teachers of the Gospel, the further we recede from the probability of forgery and imposture ; and that, upon the intimation of such suspicions from an adversary, we may confidently direct him to compare the excellence and sublimity of the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel with the capacities of its original teachers. But great as we may be willing to suppose this disparity to have been, what do we really know of the abilities of the first teachers of Christianity ? They pursued indeed humble occupations ; they were vilified in the popular adage, that “ no good thing could come out “ of Galilee ;” and of two of the chief apo-

files, Peter and John, it is said, that they were "unlearned and ignorant." If the passages in the epistle to the Corinthians relate to the preachers of Christianity, we must further describe them as "things base," "weak," "foolish," and "despised." But according to this interpretation St. Paul would include himself among those, who were not merely in the estimation of men weak and foolish, but absolutely such in respect to natural capacity. We might with equal propriety affirm, that among the first converts were the poor only, and the illiterate, when the Apostle declares, that "the wise after the flesh," "the noble," and "the mighty," who were called, were "not many," as assert, that the Apostles were not ignorant only, but incapable of intellectual improvement. It seems not to have been attended to, that the want of that worldly interest and consequence, which is derived from wealth or power, were more likely to depress them lower in the opinion of mankind, and to expose them to greater neglect and contempt, than mere mental inferiority.

We may examine this argument in another light. Whatever may have been the other subjects on which Inspiration may have operated, we cannot conceive, that the weak in

understanding have in any case been purposely selected to shew its nature and effects. In the instance of a written system of instruction mental deficiency in the author would be no security against imposture, but would certainly perplex and involve the subject in additional intricacies. It would tend to prove, that a writer of more ability might be able to make the distinction between inspiration and ordinary human endowments less perceptible. If this consequence is not to be admitted, why are we to appreciate the excellence and sublimity of the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel by an opposition of the incapacity of its teachers? If, on the other hand, no comparison can be made, and none certainly can be made, between the extent of the wisdom of man and the suggestions of inspiration, it will not depend upon the degree of his intellect, be it more or be it less, whether we are or are not brought "into the sphere of miracles."

✧ But in the statement of the fact, that the first teachers were either Galileans, or persons of defective abilities, an exception occurs, which has been neglected in the zeal to augment the necessity of miraculous interposition. A portion of the world was instructed neither by Galileans, nor by persons of "natural in-

“ capacity,” even if we exclude the labours of the learned Apostle of Tarsus. They were instructed through the medium of written documents, composed by men, whose understandings cannot be reduced to the standard of the hypothesis, and the place of whose birth we cannot correctly assign to the region of Galilee. ‘ The necessity of inspiration cannot vary with the inequalities of human capacity, and inspiration itself can be referred to human capacity only as being something, whose dictates could not originate from the powers of man, but which those powers are adapted to communicate.

We may now adjust the statement of the argument in this manner, according to the hypothesis and according to the fact. One portion of the world was converted by Jews, who are supposed to have been men of “ natural incapacity ;” another portion was converted by a Jew, who possessed an intellect of no ordinary measure, improved by the instruction of learned preceptors, and the learned intercourse of his native city. But whatever superiority the sublimity and excellence of doctrines or precepts may have, as visible effects of inspiration, when contrasted with the incapacity of the teachers, who de-

livered them, this criterion is not applicable to the example of St. Paul, nor can we equalize this difference of ability by the evasive assumption, that in the service of Christianity he also might become, like others, a mere passive channel of inspiration.

We are not at liberty, I conceive, to illustrate the words of the text by any conjectural explanation respecting the conduct of St. Paul, whether he might apply the whole of the powers which he possessed, or whether he restrained his eloquence and suppressed his erudition, in his personal teaching. We know that when he affirms that "his speech and his preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom," he could not allude to eloquence; for in this epistle he has given the first, perhaps, and most perfect specimen of its application to subjects arising out of the Christian dispensation. He could not mean to disparage the use of argument by his apostrophe, "where is the disputer of this world?" when he shews himself, whenever it is required, to be a great master of the art of reasoning. Men did not know God by means of the wisdom of this world; and St. Paul does not ignorantly censure the philosophy of his own, or any other age, in these expressions, but decides upon its

nature and incompetency from a learned acquaintance with its tenets. The doctrine of Christ crucified, which he opposed to this wisdom, was sufficient to counterbalance any casual effects of the eloquence with which he might have spoken of its benefits to mankind; for it was still regarded as foolishness by the Greeks, the authors and cultivators of this wisdom, the disciples of the Lyceum and the Academy, of Zeno and of Epicurus. He describes his preaching among the Corinthians in his resolution not "to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" intimating however that he could have accommodated his manner and teaching to hearers, who might have expected him to adapt his reasonings to rules of captious disputation, and to conform his style to examples of delusive oratory.

It appears then, that the natural abilities of the first teachers of Christianity, whatever they might have been originally, were not changed by the influence of inspiration; so that, on one hand, the lowest measure of understanding was not designed to present a contrast to inspiration; nor, on the other, was the greatest necessary to assist or to display its nature or its powers. The preaching of an elo-

quent and learned Apostle to the eloquent and learned Gentiles could not surprize or delude them into the reception of Christianity, for eloquence and learning were not novelties to a Grecian auditory, and therefore these qualifications would have availed but little, if these hearers had not discerned, in the subject of his preaching, something, which their own enquiries enabled them to decide was not the invention of an accomplished teacher, nor owed its existence to "the wisdom of man."

If we examine the four Gospels, we shall not perhaps find in them either the powers of St. Paul, or the unlettered ignorance of Galileans. We may observe, that although they all proceeded from "the same spirit of truth," yet these narratives of nearly the same facts have not been reduced by the controul of inspiration to an uniformity of style and manner, so as to exclude the appearance of peculiarities of the writers, arising from difference of disposition, of habits, of education, in short, of natural abilities.

In the depreciation of the capacities of the first teachers of the Gospel, these teachers are apparently confounded with the Evangelists; and what is alledged respecting one is applied without discrimination to the other. But is

there any reason to think that mankind were not then instructed, as they have been since, by persons of various abilities and acquirements, as inspiration neither communicated human learning, where it had not been previously attained, nor did it obliterate what had been formerly stored in the memory. It neither annihilated that improvement of the faculties, which results from their exercise and application, nor reduced the mind to its original rudeness. The gift of tongues is not an exception, as I conceive, to this remark. The knowledge of languages is not itself learning, but the means of communication; not the thing to be communicated, which may, or may not, be learning.

If indeed it should be imagined, that after a lapse of time it might be necessary that the Gospel should be preached by persons of superior qualifications, this reasoning cannot be reconciled to the known inequality of abilities among the contemporary teachers. It is not perhaps easy to explain, how the necessity of employing the eloquent and the learned, in diffusing the Gospel, should arise from the change of circumstances in the lapse of time. The Apostles in general were commanded to preach the Gospel "every where," "to every creature,"

“to all nations,” without any other restriction, than that they should commence their labours at Jerusalem. Some of the epistles of St. Paul are thought to have preceded the publication of the Gospels; the time, therefore, when learning was to be more properly applied to the instruction of mankind, coincides with the period, when the less educated Apostles were engaged in preaching the same Gospel in other parts of the world. But the portion of time, which had elapsed since the promulgation of Christianity, had made no alteration in the state of the world, as to the progress of literature. The nations of Greece and Asia were not extending their knowledge, nor advancing in civilization by the introduction of new arts. About the period of the birth of our Saviour literature and the arts had nearly reached, at Rome particularly, that perfection of which, under the circumstances of the empire, they were susceptible. The nations above mentioned had neither receded nor advanced in those respects, which might seem to require more than ordinary attainments and abilities in the primitive teachers of Christianity. Besides, the converts in these countries were numerous long before the conclusion of the first century. The interval of time therefore, which the argument

comprises, is much too narrow, and the change of circumstances too small, to enable us to determine the necessity or propriety of employing the learned and eloquent in the apostolical missions.

By separating secular wisdom from inspiration we should distinguish, and perhaps not advantageously, the teachers of the evangelical from the great teacher of the Jewish dispensation. What could create the incompatibility of one with the other under the Gospel? Nothing can be discovered in the nature of inspiration, or of human knowledge, which will explain it. All the various wisdom of the Egyptians did not interfere, as far as we can discern, with the inspiration of Moses, nor could the erudition of Daniel, nor the natural abilities of the other prophets, be supposed to obscure or to augment the splendour of their divine illumination. They preserved indeed, as the Evangelists preserve, a difference of style and manner, which appear to be their own. The learning and acquired knowledge of Solomon were conspicuous, as well as the wisdom, which he received from God. But as all knowledge is the gift of God, the wisdom of the Almighty was as much manifested in the choice of persons, on whom this gift had been

previously bestowed, as it would have been by a subsequent inspiration of such a proportion of human knowledge, as was necessary to enable the Apostles to perform the duties of teachers of the Gospel.

The expressions of St. Paul, "the wisdom of men," have been paradoxically interpreted, and arbitrarily applied by a writer, the principles of whose work, "The Diffonance of the four generally received Evangelists, &c." it is my intention to attempt to analyze in the usual series of these Lectures. He has explained the phrase, as denoting not merely the early evidence of the Christian Fathers in establishing the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, but also the human learning by which that evidence has been collected and examined. He condemns upon this authority "the pious fraud," as he terms it, "of the Fathers of the Church," and the studies of modern critics. "Observing," he says, "from St. Paul's mode of preaching the Gospel to the Corinthians, that the faith of a wise and rational Christian ought to stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," he rejects all the testimony, and all

* Evanfon's Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man, p. 4, 5.

the enquiries of writers “from Serapion to Michaelis.” The words of St. Paul, in which he describes his own manner of preaching the Gospel, are then referred, not, as the analogy required, to the character of the present narratives of the Evangelists, but to the testimony on which these narratives have been since received as authentic. But it is evident that these words were written at a time antecedent to the existence of any such evidence, for this species of evidence necessarily presupposes a written document. Can it be imagined that St. Paul intended prophetically to admonish Christians of every age not to attend to the external testimony of the Gospels, which the writers were then composing, when he must at the same time impeach the testimony of the Corinthians themselves and all others, who were able to attest, from personal knowledge, the authenticity of this Epistle?

It is also affirmed, “that all the external
“^d evidence, which the case admits, is so
“scanty and defective, that it is not possible
“to prove the authenticity of any of the evan-
“gelical histories upon that ground only;”

^d Evanfon’s Letter to Dr. Priestley’s Young Man, Pref.
p. I.

and it is expected, " that the several objection-
" able passages should be clearly reconciled, as
" the Scriptures really exist, without recur-
" ring to any human authority, or to conjec-
" tures unwarranted by the Gospels them-
" selves." That the external testimony is
" scanty and defective" is an assertion which
is incorrect, in whatever way we explain it.
It is incorrect, whether we understand that it
implies, that the case did not from its nature
admit sufficient evidence, or, that what was
known to many, has been attested by few.
We have not indeed all the original evidence ;
for much, that was written, has perished. At
present I shall only observe, that the Gospel
was taught orally during a period of eight years.
During this interval the number of witnesses
of this teaching must have been increasing by
the accession of new converts, and their fami-
lies. The Gospels therefore were committed
to writing, when their contents could be
verified, not by determining the identity of
autographs, but by comparing the preaching,
to which the Christians had been habituated,
with the written narrative. At this time also
there must have been alive many believers at
Jerusalem, contemporary with our Saviour,
who must have remembered not only the latter

events of his history, but his teaching in their synagogues, and in the Temple. This circumstance essentially distinguishes the authentication of the evangelical, from the authentication of every other history. The testimony of the first converts would prove, what their contemporaries would be so much interested in knowing, that such a Gospel was the same with that, by the preaching of which they had been converted to Christianity, or according to which the first Christians had been educated, before it was committed to writing. How much more satisfactory would this be than a mere assurance, that such a writing was certainly an apostolical autograph ! We may insist likewise upon the facility with which the written narrative could be thus verified, even by such converts as the adversaries of Christianity term mean and ignorant persons. The original evidence then was simple and copious ; and that which we now have cannot be denominated scanty, when, even in the short letter, of ^c Polycarp, he either cites or refers to more than one half of the books, which constitute the present volume of the New Testament. Our next enquiry is, whether it is de-

^c Powel's Disc. p. 70.

fective ? And this involves a question, how far the citation by contemporary writers of passages from various parts of a book, is evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the whole ? It might indeed be supposed, however rashly, that the citations themselves were the only genuine parts of the work ; but this could be said of the Gospels with less detriment to their credibility, than of any other writings whatever. They have a source of credibility peculiar to themselves, arising from their form of composition. The identification of the doctrines with the facts of the Gospels, by augmenting the intimacy of the connection of one with the other, has rendered a forgery of detached parts more difficult than it would have been, if the Gospels had consisted merely of a system of moral precepts, severed from the narrative, and had not referred to the general character of the divine person, who delivered them. For the same reason they, who would attempt to mutilate the Gospels on the pretext of the want of authenticity, would find it difficult to conceal the chasm which would be produced by the abstraction of even no very considerable portion of the narrative. The external evidence therefore must be rejected, if at all, for reasons,

which are better supported than any, that are drawn from its scantiness, or defects. We may indeed rather suspect that “wisdom of man,” by which, after a lapse of so many centuries, it has now been discovered, that the evidence, on which the authenticity of the Gospels has been received, is defective in kind, and insufficient in degree, and therefore cannot produce rational conviction; and that there is other evidence, better adapted to the understanding of mankind, and which we are directed in Scripture to apply, not only as a test of authenticity, but also as a criterion of Revelation itself.

It is alledged, that another method is indicated for attaining certainty on these subjects; “the power of God,” by which the author of “The Diffonance” understands “the testimony of prophecy.” But no example is, or perhaps can be, adduced, of the use of this expression in this manner from the writings of St. Paul, or from any other part of Scripture. It was observed before, that the mere phrase, “the wisdom of man,” constituted the sole scriptural authority respecting the incompetency of external evidence in general; and here, “the power of God” is supposed, by the same arbitrary exposition, to denote not only some

superior testimony, but particularly that of prophecy. "The Diffonance" however is a work, which fully illustrates the position, that perversion of intellect is marked by requiring more proof than particular subjects will admit; as natural incapacity or great ignorance are indicated, by being satisfied with insufficient or with inapplicable testimony.

The reduction of the Canon of the New Testament to its just extent by the direction of Scripture and the light of prophecy, must derive its claim to attention, after the expiration of eighteen centuries, solely from our reverence for the alledged sanction of the attempt. The invalidation of the authenticity of the books of which the canon at present consists, has been undertaken in order to remove passages, the interpretation of which does not favour the Socinian system; and it is perhaps more easy to alledge defects in the external evidence, and to intimate suspicions of extensive forgery, than to pervert the meaning of so large a portion, which those passages form of the individual books, and to withstand an explication of them founded on that general analogy, which subsists in the different parts of the unmutilated record.

It will be my object in this investigation to

refer a large mass of minute and independent objections to some general topics of discussion, and trace them to their principles. I propose therefore to examine the passages of Scripture relative to the application of prophecy, as a standard of the authenticity of the sacred writings; to determine the sufficiency of the external evidence, when compared with prophecy, for the authority of these works; to enquire whether the publication of spurious and fictitious books had, at the time, any influence in perplexing the question respecting the genuineness of the Scriptures; to ascertain the grounds on which we receive the two first chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel; to investigate in what manner, if in any, the establishment of Christianity in the time of Constantine, as the religion of the state, tended to facilitate the corruption of the written Gospels; and to reconcile the supposed anachronisms in the language of the Gospels by an historical sketch of the diffusion of the Greek tongue among various parts of the world. These subjects are not altogether new; but it is not my intention to arrange, or abbreviate, or repeat the arguments and enquiries, of preceding writers. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that a complete examination of "The

“Diffonance” cannot be comprised in these Lectures from the minuteness of some parts, and the extent of others. These therefore may perhaps be reserved for another place.

^ The peculiarity, which distinguishes the mode, adopted in that work, from every other mode of determining the Canon of the New Testament, is the absolute rejection of one branch of evidence, to which much importance has been always justly attributed, the external or historical testimony. All facts seem to admit the same species of proof; but the author of “The Diffonance” affirms, that “facts of different natures, to render them credible, require very different kinds of testimony.” It may not be unnecessary to consider the application of this principle to two historical facts, the truth of which depends on this variety of evidence. These facts are, “the invasion of Greece by Xerxes,” and “the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.” The reason assigned for admitting the former fact to be true is, that the Greek “Historians, who have recorded it, could have no supposable motive to falsify as to the main fact itself.” It must indeed be allowed, that

^f Evanfon’s Letter to Dr. Priestley’s Young Man, p. 6.

where the evidence is contemporary with the events, and particularly, where it is the evidence of persons, who have had some share in producing them, it may happen, that their accounts, according to the nature of the events, may be exaggerated through vanity, or misrepresented through a spirit of animosity to a contrary party. This is a defect to which personal evidence may, in general, be liable; but, on the other hand, the truth of great events is secured by their publicity being in proportion to the magnitude of their objects, to the number of agents, and the time occupied in their preparation and accomplishment. This publicity is not supposed to prevent partiality altogether from operating upon the mind of the historian, but it exposes him to detection by a comparison of other narratives, originating in the importance of the events and the facility of obtaining information. If we regard the Evangelists merely as contemporary witnesses, we cannot discover any occasion on which they could glory in their Master, that would not be counterbalanced by the circumstance of his death. Christ crucified was "a stumbling-block" to their countrymen, and "foolishness" to the philosophic stranger, notwithstanding the dignity of our Lord's descent,

and the perfection of his moral character. It is difficult to discover what worldly interest could be promoted by those doctrines, which it is the object of "The Diffonance" to prove to be spurious interpolations. Indeed it would be difficult to shew, that Christianity was not in every form unfavourable to the temporal welfare of its disciples, till the reign of Constantine, a period much too distant for the supposed impostors to derive or to expect any advantage from their corruptions of the Gospels.

That the truth or falsehood of the invasion of Greece by Xerxes is of no consequence to individuals of these times, is a position which cannot be admitted. It may not be of importance to us; that is, our political or any other condition are not affected by the former existence of such a place as Troy, or by such an event as the Trojan war; but it is of much importance to the general credibility of history that these facts should be received as true. It may have the semblance of paradox to assert, that the truth of the facts recorded in the New Testament has any dependence upon the truth of such facts as the war of Troy, or the invasion of Greece. But history has been always believed on the same kind of evidence.

Even fable itself has not been always introduced to falsify history, but sometimes to be its form of communication, and on other occasions to complete its imperfect chronicles. When therefore we endeavour, on speculative grounds, to invalidate the veracity of persons, who had the best opportunity of knowing the facts which they commemorate, what will prevent the application of the same doubts to the evidence of the credibility of the New Testament? The assistance of the Holy Spirit consisted in calling all things to the remembrance of our Lord's disciples; not in superseding the former employment of their faculties, but in renewing the impressions formerly made, and in distinguishing their testimony, not by its kind, but by its superior fulness and accuracy. When our Saviour said, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you;" he did not however assign this as the only cause of the force of their testimony, but combined it with another, "Ye also shall bear witness of me, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

The miraculous facts recorded of the Exo-

dus of the Israelites are received by the Author of "The Diffonance" merely on account of "the testimony & which the spirit of prophecy bears to the general truth of the Pentateuch, and the divine authority of the Jewish religion." This is the different kind of testimony, by which the truth of the miraculous facts of the ancient sacred history is said to be confirmed, in opposition to the evidence of the facts of the Heathen annals. But where this testimony of the spirit of prophecy is to be found, in what words it is communicated, and in what manner it is applied, are questions, which I propose soon to discuss.

. At present I shall vindicate the minuteness, with which I shall be found frequently to have pursued the reply to various objections, that may seem to derive their importance solely from such an examination. For I apprehend, that a false dignity is not rarely assumed in controversial discussions, and is sustained by a contemptuous disregard of objections, which it is perhaps more easy to stigmatize with epithets of reproach, than to analyze by regular argument. If objections be intricate, they may be disentangled; if futile, their ineffici-

ency may be exposed ; if absurd, their absurdity may be demonstrated. Contempt is too often the refuge of ignorance in distress ; but even if it were the effect of better knowledge, and superior ability, it is most improperly applied to the subject of religion, both as it is dogmatical and irreverent. Contempt is neither the proof nor the sign of superiority ; and in what instance may not reason and argument be substituted for expressions of contempt ? If an adversary be disposed to assign to it all the polemical value which we can expect, it can never amount to more than the simple opposition of a negative. Would extensive knowledge and superior ability appear less conspicuously to vulgar observers, in a direct examination, than when they are to be inferred from supercilious neglect ? If an objection be neglected, who can distinguish whether it is neglected because it is condemned only, or because it is unanswerable ? This ambiguity, which is as favourable to one party as to the other, can be removed only by a formal investigation. Sophistry and ignorance may be obvious to the experienced reasoner, or the learned enquirer ; yet contempt cannot be judiciously employed to detach the adherents of scepticism, who are perhaps more

satisfied, that, as nothing but contempt is opposed to what has influenced their minds, they themselves have just reasoning and accurate knowledge on their side. But no objection is unworthy the consideration of the most able, or the most learned. Different persons are so variously impressed by different objections, that it is impossible to affirm, that the most frivolous are the most harmless. Prejudice may so far counteract the effect of liberal attainments, as to reduce improved minds to the level of those, which are rude and undisciplined ; and conjectures and insinuations may perplex with doubts, understandings, which, when employed on other subjects, appear to be vigorous, and cultivated, and enlarged.

SERMON II.

REV. xix. 10.

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

IT may be justly questioned, whether the Almighty has ever employed prophecy to authenticate any of the writings, in which the revelation of his will has been communicated to mankind. If this had been one of the purposes of this testimony, we might have expected, that it would consist of a distinct collection of predictions, and not of a few indeterminate passages of scripture ; and, that it would not be resolvable into a still more indefinite form, “the general spirit of prophecy.”

It is the object of the author of “The Dissonance” (in obedience, as he professes, to an inspired command) to reject all the proofs of written revelation, which are founded “on mere human testimony.” The words of the text, according to this interpretation, contain the injunction, by which we are directed to

apply to prophecy, as to the standard of revelation, and the criterion of the authenticity of the writings, in which it is conveyed.

Those miracles, which are admitted by this writer to have any validity, as proofs, are said to derive their credibility, as facts, from their association with predictions; and, without this combination, they are declared to be insufficient means of conviction. He supposes, that a “ he can prove, not only from the dictates of “ human reason, but from the voice of revelation, that miracles, of themselves, do not “ afford even to the spectators a sufficiently “ firm and satisfactory foundation for their religious faith.” I propose therefore to consider, although perhaps not strictly according to this arrangement, whether the evidence of miracles is affected by its connection with prophecy; to examine the reasons, which are adduced in support of the superiority of the proof by prophecy, above that by miracles; the grounds on which we receive these two species of evidence, and the prophetic passages of the inspired writers, which are said to constitute the criterion of authentic scripture.

^a Evanfon's Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man, p.

When we are referred to scripture, as the authority for the rejection of miracles, because mankind might have been “deluded and deceived by such evidence,” we must enquire in what language of scripture the evidence, arising from miracles, is thus condemned; in what circumstances their defects, as proofs, are said to consist, and whether prophecy alters or corrects them.

“With regard to miracles under the Old Covenant,” it is said^b, “that God himself, by his prophet Moses, cautioned the Jews against receiving the religious doctrines of any pretended prophet, though he should even work miracles to convince them, because they would be liable to be deluded and deceived by such evidence. ‘If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love

^b Diff. Pref. p. viii. 2d edit.

‘ the Lord your God with all your heart and
‘ with all your soul.” The sufficiency of the
evidence of miracles, so far from being invali-
dated, is asserted in this injunction of Moses.
He seems to refer to it familiarly, as the best
species of evidence; as the evidence to which
they had been habituated, and the foundation
on which their faith is supposed at this time
to be established. The temptation therefore
consisted in witnessing the same evidence ap-
plied to a contrary purpose; that evidence,
whose force they had before acknowledged,
now adduced to evince their firmness, to dis-
cover the principle of their professions, to as-
certain whether they were ready to transfer
their obedience to another master, whose
power they might erroneously estimate from
the miracles of his pretended ministers. But
if we argue from the explanation of the au-
thor of “ The Diffonance,” we may say, that,
as the object of the Almighty was to ascertain
the influence of his favours and mercies on
the minds of the Israelites, what proof could
be expected of their fidelity, when a test was
to be applied, which was, in the estimation of
the Almighty himself, inadequate and falla-
cious? Was not this also a late period of their
history to promulgate a caution against the

evidence of miracles derived from its intrinsic imperfections? The Israelites had been long accustomed to the visible and extraordinary display of the power of the Almighty, and are now, for the first time, informed, that miracles may delude their senses, and mislead their understandings. What could be the guilt, in the eye of God, of those men, who refused to admit, as evidences of his will, those signs and wonders, to which He himself had not communicated authority or reality? According to the impious principle which I am opposing, miracles are divested of their awful character, and deprived of their proper influence upon the senses and understanding of mankind, and are reduced to something lower, as to dignity, and weaker, as to effect, than ordinary events. But in this very passage of scripture, in which miracles are said to be delusive and fallacious, they are introduced in combination with prophecy, and therefore the distinction of miracles with, and of miracles without, preceding predictions, (by which we are said to be enabled to discriminate real from fictitious wonders,) is not to be deduced from the authority of this passage.

Nor do I conceive, even if it should be ad-

mitted to be a correct remark, that God "hath
" never rested the credit of his supernatural
" revelation to his creatures upon mere mira-
" cles alone, even to those spectators of them;
" who were chiefly intended to be convinced
" of its truth and certainty," that we should
be at liberty to frame an inductive argument
from the general observation. We could not
infer (as it would almost seem, according to
this reasoning, that we might infer) that we
had here discovered a law, which the Al-
mighty had prescribed to himself in confirm-
ing the communication of his will to man-
kind, in the same manner as we may collect
the laws, by which he continues the exist-
ence, and regulates the operations, of the ma-
terial world. The language and spirit of the
remark imply, that the Almighty did not esta-
blish miracles alone as the foundation of be-
lief, because they were of a nature not to jus-
tify such a degree of confidence in the repre-
sentations of the senses. Are we then to ima-
gine that the spectators might trust to the im-
pressions made upon their senses, when the
miracle was accompanied with prophecy; but
that a miracle, without this security for its
reality, is to be considered as of uncertain ex-
istence? But when it is assumed that the

senses may be deluded, the addition of prophecy would not be any confirmation of the miraculous act. The uncertainty still remains the same. Whether the spectator affirm that the miraculous act coincides with the prophecy, or is contradictory to it, his testimony may be disputed. As we are supposed to be incompetent judges of the reality of a miracle, so are we of the existence of all sensible objects; and therefore the most conclusive proceeding would be, to question the existence of the prophecy itself, the reality of which, as well as that of the miracle, can be proved only by the evidence of the senses. And why should this evidence be regarded as unquestionable in one case, and liable to fallacy in the other?

With respect to those persons who derive, from historical records, the conviction of the truth of the early facts of this nature, the author of "The Dissonance" would refer them solely to prophecy, as the foundation of their credit. He "receives the miraculous facts recorded of the Exodus of the Israelites on the testimony which the spirit of prophecy bears to the general truth of the Pentateuch, and to the divine authority of the Jewish religion; but otherwise he would have re-

“ferred” those facts “to the same class with
“the early fables of the Romans, and all those
“wonderful circumstances, which are said to
“have attended the origin of every other na-
“tion recorded in ancient history.” It is to
be observed, that in the miracles performed
by Moses immediately preceding the depar-
ture of the Israelites from Egypt, the accom-
plishment succeeded the prediction with the
interposition of a very short interval. When
indeed the prophecy is delivered in one age,
and the transactions, to which it refers, take
place after the revolution of many succeeding
ages, we may then be satisfied that they are
not contemporary fictions. But if the pre-
diction and the accomplishment be separated
by an inconsiderable portion of time, and are
both recorded by the same writer, as in the
instances of the miracles wrought by Moses,
which attended the Exod of the Israelites, in
this case the evidence of prophecy can add no
weight to that of miracles. The writer may
be able to adjust the miracles to the prophecy,
or the prophecy to the miracles, as the inter-
val comprehends so very small a portion of
futurity. The record of the miracle, uncon-
nected with the delivery of prophecy, would
have been equally satisfactory, as a proof, and

obligatory upon the conduct. If the one will not convince, conviction cannot be expected from the other. This, it must be acknowledged, is the weakest case in prophecy that can be specified, because the shortness of the intervening period brings the accomplishment and the prediction into the same record, and under the controul of the same writer. I wish however to guard my meaning from misapprehension by observing, that although the length or shortness of the interval should really make no difference whatever with respect to the powers and evidences of prophecy, yet, when the prophecy and the fact are recorded in the same writing, the question of the priority of the prophecy may be disputed with more plausibility than when the periods between each are longer, and one person records the prophecy, and another the fulfilment.

In order to evince the effects of the superior influence of prophecy, it is observed in “ The Diffonance,” that “ the Jews were continually apostatizing to idolatry, notwithstanding the numerous miracles recorded in their history, and the occasional supernatural interposition of divine power, and yet were thoroughly convinced of the truth and

“divine origin, and authority of the Mosaic
“covenant, upon their so forcibly feeling the
“severe completion of the prophecies in their
“Babylonish captivity.” That a nation would
be permanently influenced by the sufferings
of captivity, and that their conduct would be
altered upon those reflections, which a state of
general suffering would necessarily produce,
is probable and natural. But it is not the
design of the author to explain the reformation
of the Jewish people in so simple a manner.
We are expected, if not entirely to overlook
the necessary effects of a long pressure of
calamity upon the mind, yet to refer this
conviction of the Jews respecting the truth
and divine origin of the Mosaic covenant,
and their abandonment of idolatry, to two
causes instead of one: first, to the influence
of their reflections on the completion of their
prophecies; and, secondly, to the evils of their
late condition. If the real cause of their
apostasy to idolatry had been, their doubts
respecting the truth and divine origin of the
Mosaic covenant, it might perhaps have been
accounted for, perhaps even vindicated, upon
the principles of “The Diffonance,” by alledging
the want of other evidence than miracles. But
this want of evidence was not

the cause of their apostasy ; neither is it probable that an accumulation of prophecies would have prevented it.

It would appear from the expressions of the preceding citation, as if the former generations were required to receive and acknowledge the truth and divine origin of the Mosaic covenant upon one kind of proof, and the latter upon another. But, if we place on one side the accumulated testimony, which the Almighty gave of himself, and, on the other, the intermarriages of the Jews with the idolatrous nations, we may then be convinced, that these connections, continued through several generations, were sufficiently powerful to counteract the operation of the commands of the Almighty, and to obliterate for a time the evidence of the revelation of his will. The Jews persisted in their disobedience to the important precept, not to contract alliances with the families of idolatrous strangers, from the time of their first settlement in the land promised to their forefathers, to the conclusion of their captivity. This land too they were enabled to occupy by the means of miracles, and in conformity with prophecy. That they were at length reclaimed from idolatry by their reflections on those prophecies, which were ac-

complished in their punishment, is not confirmed by any historical facts. It is a reason, which is not assigned in the account of their conduct at that time. The Jewish historian relates^c, “ that the people desired of Ezra, “ that the laws of Moses might be read to “ them. Accordingly he stood in the midst “ of the multitude and read them. Now by “ hearing the laws read to them, they were “ instructed to be righteous men for the present and for the future; but as for their past “ offences, they were displeased at themselves, “ considering, that if they had kept the law, “ they had endured none of those miseries “ which they had experienced.” Hence it is evident, that they did not refer to their prophets to examine, how their calamities had coincided with the predictions, but to the laws of Moses, to observe the deviations of their conduct from the injunctions of their venerated legislator. For prophecies, without any derogation from their awful and sublime nature, cannot be said to be standards of moral conduct, by the application of which degrees of guilt or righteousness may be determined.

^c Antiq. lib. xi. cap. 5. Whiston's translation; and Ezra.

Transgressions are greater or less according to their deviations from certain laws.

It is invidiously observed, that the Jews apostatized, “ notwithstanding the numerous “ miracles recorded in their history ;” as if prophecy would have prevented that defection, from which afterwards, according to our author’s supposition, they were reclaimed through the superior influence of this more perfect evidence. But the Israelites were not led to repentance in former ages by the accomplishment of the prophecies against the house of Jeroboam. The very person, who exterminated the house of Jeroboam according to the prophecy of Ahijah, committed the same abominations as his predecessor ; and the same sentence, which was prophetically denounced against Jeroboam, was prophesied and fulfilled against his race also. Even Zimri, who executed the prophecy, transgressed in a similar manner, and received a similar condemnation. The sons and successors of Josiah, who had witnessed the fulfilment of the prophecies in the person and actions of their father, were as corrupt and disobedient as any of their predecessors. We may therefore enquire, whether it appears, upon an examination of the history of the Jews, that they were

more restrained from apostasy by the means of prophecy under their kings, than by the means of miracles under their theocracy?

There are strong exceptions to the observation, that miracles derive their authority from preceding predictions. They sometimes enhance the credit of a prophecy at the time that it is delivered, and impart assurance to the person who is the object of it, that it shall be fulfilled. When Hezekiah was informed by Isaiah that he should recover from his sickness, and that his life should be prolonged, he required a sign which should confirm the prophetic promise. He believed the prophecy on the evidence of a miracle, the retrogradation of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, which, although intended for his own conviction, was of such a nature as to be observed at Babylon, and was probably recorded in their astronomical registers, and was otherwise well calculated, without such assistance, to be remembered by individuals of other countries, for a longer period than that to which the life of Hezekiah was protracted. When also a prophet of the Lord unexpectedly appeared before Jeroboam, while he was standing at an idolatrous altar, and performing abominable rites, he, without regarding the authority of

Jeroboam, or the presence of the children of Israel at this "feast," which their king had "ordained," "even in the month which he "had devised of his own heart," abruptly addressed his awful denunciation to the altar, on which the offensive sacrifices had been offered up, and foretold, that a time would come, when the bodies of the priests of the high places should be burnt upon it, as a sacrifice to avenge the crime of its present pollution. "And he gave a sign the same day, "saying, Behold, the altar shall be rent, and "the ashes that are upon it shall be poured "out. When Jeroboam heard the saying of "the man of God, he stretched forth his hand "from the altar," as a signal of violence to the person of the prophet, and "his hand "dried up," "the altar also was rent, and the "ashes poured out from the altar, according "to the sign which the man of God had given "by the word of the Lord." The event here predicted was not to take place till the time of Josiah, a period of 350 years; but we cannot doubt that the impression of the truth of the prediction on the minds of the spectators of these miracles was their real end and purpose.

The author of "The Dissonance" has pursued strongly, but inaccurately, a parallel be-

tween miracles and prophecy. “To those of
“the present age,” he observes^d, “who have
“any doubt about the certainty of the Chris-
“tian religion, and consequently of the truth
“and authenticity of those histories in which
“it is recorded, it cannot be of the least use
“to alledge the miraculous acts there, and
“there only, related, to have been performed
“by the first teachers of that revelation, be-
“cause those acts, making a very considerable
“part of the narrative, the authority and cre-
“dibility of the histories must be first firmly
“established before the miracles contained in
“them can reasonably be admitted as real
“facts.” That the establishment of the cre-
dibility of the history should precede any rea-
soning from the miracles recorded in it, may
be allowed. We may also add, that the mo-
ral precepts, which are inculcated, derive their
obligatory function, as divine rules of conduct,
from the result of the same enquiry. We
may, and indeed must think, that the morality
contained in the Gospel is, when taken in a
speculative light, *worthy* a divine original;
but some direct evidence of this is required to
enforce the duty of applying its maxims to

^d Diffonance, p. 22, 23.

the regulation of our actions as Christians. Its purity, its excellence, its sublimity, are characteristics of evangelical morality; but these qualities are not the sanctions by which its precepts have been established, nor the authorities upon which they have been received. Our obligation to obey them is derived only from the authenticity of the records which contain them; records, by which we are assured that these rules of life were delivered by a teacher, whose mission was shewn indisputably to be from heaven. The genuineness or authenticity of every history must be established in the same manner, whether the history contains miracles, or not. This circumstance does not affect the species of evidence, nor compel us to admit any proof, with which we should not otherwise be satisfied; neither does it make less evidence, nor a greater proportion, nor a different kind of it, indispensable for conviction. The reason also does not appear why it is more or less necessary to ascertain the authenticity of these books, because the miraculous acts form "a very considerable part of the narration," and because "they are there, and there only, related." If external evidence were required to be of such a nature as to extend to every portion of a

book, and to recite or to refer to each fact or opinion, taken separately, then indeed the proportion of the number of miracles to the whole book might make more or less of that evidence necessary for its authentication. But what form would such evidence then assume? It would become merely a copy of the writing in question. Nor should we obtain more assurance, even if these miracles were all separately specified in any other book. It would be still necessary to examine that book by the same canons of evidence, which we apply to the Gospels. And of what description would that work be, which should contain all the miracles of our Saviour? We must suppose that the miracles are all related in the same manner as we find them in the evangelical histories, or otherwise they could not be identified with those which they were designed to confirm. If all the miracles were recorded, and nothing more, how could such documents, even if they were contemporary works, corroborate the authenticity of the present Gospels? The readers would justly conclude, that the Gospels were the perfect history; and the other, the miracles detached from their connection with these very narratives. No advantage therefore is gained by recurring to

other accounts, as if they would communicate authority to the Gospels. The objection would have had some appearance of reason, if there had been but one Gospel only; but, in the present circumstances, it is little less than absurd to say, that the miracles are “there, and “there only, related.”

With respect to prophecy, and its supposed superiority to miracles, as evidence, an attempt is made to deduce it from an imputed peculiarity in its nature, which, if true, would seem to prove, that it did, as a species of evidence, exceed that of miracles. “The testimony of prophecy,” it is said, “does not “depend in the least upon the veracity or “credibility of the writer; but every man, “capable of understanding the meaning of “the prediction, and comparing it with the “corresponding events, whereby it hath been, “or is completed, is a competent judge of the “degree of proof it affords.” But this assertion of the infallibility of prophecy, as a test, cannot be made with reference to the instances of miracles and prophecy which the author himself has adduced as credible, on the “general testimony,” as he calls it, “of the “spirit of prophecy.” Where the interval between the prediction and the accomplish-

ment is very short, the credibility both of the miracle and the prophecy depends on the veracity of the writer, and the authenticity of the history. In the other case, where prophecies allude to remote periods, are they to be considered as insulated, and detached from the credibility of the rest of the book, in which they are inserted? We can scarcely indeed admit, that they are independent of all connection with the other subjects in it; but, even if we allow that this might be so, yet we cannot separate them from the age of the writer. If we do, it will be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine, whether the prophecy preceded the alledged accomplishment, or not: particularly, if they have no appropriate place in the writing to which we can assign their date, and no reference to collateral incidents. It is said, that we have only to compare the prediction with the events to which it refers, in order to be convinced of the preeminence of prophecy over miracles. But the priority of the prophecy, which is the most difficult part of the enquiry, is here assumed; and that priority can be determined by that external evidence only, of which it is declared to be independent. A prophecy, which is not fulfilled at the time

predicted, is of no value; but how can we ascertain the fulfilment, if we cannot rely upon the veracity and credibility of historical testimony? The truth or falsehood of facts cannot be determined either by argument or prophecy, but by a simple appeal to written evidence. If there be any reason to doubt whether these predicted events actually came to pass, to what other testimony, besides that of history, can we resort? Unbelievers have said, on so many occasions, that they do not require specification, that the history of the accomplishment was accommodated to the prophecy, and that they have no satisfactory evidence of the divine origin of a prediction. But how shall we ever be able to convince the professed infidel upon the principles of the author of "The Diffonance?"

It is further asserted, "that prophecy is "not only the most satisfactory, but also the "most lasting supernatural evidence of the "truth of any revelation." As the author of "the Divine Legation of Moses" has expressed the same remark partly in the same, and partly in more forcible terms, and at greater length, I wish to exhibit the position

* Book ix. c. 6. p. 275. 8vo.

which he assumes, of the superiority of prophecy over miracles, with the advantage of a more expanded representation. “ But by the
“ time this miraculous power began to fail,
“ another was preparing to supply its place,
“ of still greater efficacy ; I mean, that of
“ prophecy. For the sovereign Master has
“ been graciously pleased to give to the later
“ ages of the church *more than an equivalent*
“ for what he had bestowed upon the earlier,
“ in beginning to shower down on his chosen
“ servants of the New Covenant the riches of
“ prophecy, as the power of working miracles
“ abated. So early was this preparation made
“ for that *stronger and more lasting support.*”
The epithet “ lasting” may denote, either
some intrinsic durability in the support itself,
as opposed to that kind of support, whose
strength and stability diminish from some ex-
ternal causes ; or, as one that is not to be su-
perseded by something else ; or, lastly, one
that is continued from one age to another.
“ The evidence of miracles,” according to the
same writer, “ seems by its nature to lessen
“ somewhat by time ; while that from pro-
“ phesy gains strength by it, and grows more

^f Divine Legat. b. ix. c. 6. p. 277.

“ and more convictive, till the gradual and
 “ full completion of all its parts makes the
 “ splendour of it irresistible.” It is of im-
 portance to examine whether there is any
 thing of this perishable kind in the nature of
 the evidence of miracles. Let us suppose that,
 at a given period, a prophecy receives its com-
 pletion ; and a miracle, unconnected with the
 prophecy, is performed at the same time. The
 events, by which the prediction is fulfilled,
 and the circumstances of the miracle, are both
 recorded with the same accuracy by contem-
 porary writers. Ages pass away before the
 accomplishment of another prophecy arrives.
 During this interval, do the miracle exhibited,
 and the prophecy fulfilled, continue to be re-
 spectively of the same authority and credibi-
 lity, or do they not ? What cause is there,
 which shall impair the credibility of the mi-
 racle, which shall not equally affect the his-
 tory of the events, by which the prophecy is
 supposed to be accomplished ? On the con-
 trary, it is evident the foundation of the cre-
 dibility both of miracles and of prophecy,
 when recorded, is the same ; that they both
 equally derive their authority from their truth
 and reality, and must have, as written evi-
 dences, an equal durability and permanence.

• Besides, what shall we obtain, if we suppose predictions and their fulfilments to be increased to any number whatever; is this accumulation any thing more than an augmentation of the quantity of this kind of evidence? As to the kind of evidence, it cannot acquire any additional strength; and, indeed, though the quantity of it may be augmented, it is but an accumulation of the same kind of materials, without connection or dependence. The truth of each particular prediction is founded upon the limitation of it to its own period, and can neither be invalidated nor confirmed by the truth or falsehood of those of higher date, or different dispensations. If a prophecy be not supported by external evidence, it is nothing in itself; whereas the reality of a miracle may be examined by that evidence, which in "The Diffonance" is preferred to every other. We may enquire into the circumstances of its performance, its degree of publicity, the apparent means employed, the occasion, the completeness of the effect produced, and the advancement of the interest, if any, of the agent. These particulars belong to the head of internal evidence, and the oral delivery of a prophecy scarcely admits of its application.

“ Miracles are however thought to be superseded by prophecy. “ The supernatural power “ of working miracles,” it is said, “ was only “ intended to gain the new religion attention “ from the world, and to be a present testimony of its divine origin and authority till “ the more lasting and more satisfactory proof “ of completed prophecy could take place.” To affirm that any evidence possesses, on one hand, so much force, as to be sufficient to prove, that the origin and authority of a new religion are divine; and, on the other, to have only a temporary duration; is inconsistent and unintelligible: for in whatever manner or degree we weaken the evidence, either as to its foundation, its support, its extent, or its permanency, in the same degree also its general credibility is affected. Besides, we do not perceive any such characteristic difference in these two supernatural species of testimony, miracles and prophecy, whatever there may be in others, that miracles proved a religion to be divine during the time that more lasting and more satisfactory evidence was preparing. Completed prophecy could do no more than prove a religion to be divine in its origin. And this is supposed to have been previously done by miracles. Can there be this strange

diversity in the two, that one kind proves, for a time, the religion to be divine in its origin, while the other proves the same to be divine for ever ? The believers therefore of that new religion must be divided into two classes ; those who receive it on the proof of miracles, and those who live when they can have the more lasting and more satisfactory testimony of prophecy : and yet both believe their religion to be divine in its origin. The introduction therefore of the new religion must have been unseasonable, if the best proof of its divine authority were not ready at the time of its publication.

But the power of proving, even for a season, a new religion to be divine, cannot be ascribed to miracles, consistently with the principles of "The Diffonance." The author does not attribute any credibility to miracles, not preceded by prophecy ; and here miracles are supposed to have a reality when separated from prophecy, and to answer a most important purpose. He has previously observed, that the Jews were cautioned by Moses, that they might be "deceived and deluded" by such evidence ; and yet the same evidence is in this passage regarded as capable of proving, at least for a time, the origin of a new religion to be

divine : and therefore is considered by this writer as satisfactory grounds of faith during that interval. The author also of the Divine Legation incurs a similar imputation of inconsistency, when he asserts, that the evidence of prophecy “ was not wanted while miracles “ in a fort remained ;” and yet, in describing the preeminence of prophecy above miracles, he argues, that “ this advantage is further “ seen by its being less subject to the mistakes “ and fallacious impressions of sense than miracles are.” Upon comparing these passages we find, that in one a miracle is admitted to be a perfect proof, and in the other to be no proof whatever.

It was an argument of an acute metaphysician, who was also the distinguished historian of our own country, that the testimony of facts became every day less credible by lapse of time. But the existence of the historical facts related of several eminent persons of antiquity are at present more credible than they were ten centuries ago. The circumstances connected with their actions have been more accurately examined ; they have been confirmed by the testimony of ancient writers, scarcely known, or perhaps discovered, in those dark ages ; by the accounts of modern

travellers; by the progress of geographical science; by the adjustment of chronology to history; and even by the evidence of ancient memorials, brought to light in later ages. These concurring and auxiliary proofs have removed difficulties in history so effectually, that the facts of the ancient periods have now a more secure foundation of credibility than many parts of our own history, the events of which occurred at a much less considerable distance of time. It may indeed be objected, that there is only an accumulation of the same species of evidence, and that time may affect it in its largest as well as smallest collections. But it is difficult to conceive how time can operate towards the invalidation of evidence of this kind, otherwise than by the destruction of the historical memorials themselves. But this effect of time upon different kinds of evidence would (if it did at all) equally diminish the credibility of a prophecy as well as that of a miracle. The former is a matter of fact as well as the latter, and more liable to have the credibility of its existence injured by lapse of time, as it must always precede, and often does precede, the fact of

§ The histories of the families of the Lancastrians and Yorkists. See Hume.

fulfilment, several centuries. The author of "The Diffonance" inverts this order of things, and the grounds of his conviction. He professes to believe facts in history because they were predicted. Others believe the divine authority of prophecy because the facts, which are predicted, are historically true. It is indeed absurd to suppose, that prophecy can, at the time of its delivery, be an evidence to the truth of history, as it must be adduced as a testimony to what was not in existence at the time it was pronounced. The prophet, according to the former supposition, must have foreseen the composition of the history, in which should be recorded the accomplishment of his own predictions.

We may next enquire, whether any delusive miracles are related in scripture to have been performed by any agents, human or demoniacal. In "The Diffonance" we are informed, that "in the New Testament our Saviour and his apostles Paul and John have warned us, that the false and fabulous superstition, which would for so many centuries supplant the true religion of the Gospel, would be embraced by the people, in consequence of their delusion, by signs and

“lying wonders, and all the deceivableness of
“unrighteousness.” The Apostle does not speak
of false miracles; and the miracles performed
by false prophets and deceivers, and even by
the man of sin himself, are no where said to
have been illusory. The trial consisted in re-
sisting the efforts of an adversary, who might
adduce true evidence for a pretended revelation,
and the delusion itself consisted in believing
that he came from God, not in believing false
evidence to be true. It seems, that if in any
single instance, well authenticated, the evi-
dence of miracles had been rendered ambi-
guous by unreal phenomena, a revelation
would have been requisite, whenever a mira-
cle was subsequently performed, in order to
convince the mind that the senses had not
been deluded. If we recur to the hypothesis
of “The Diffonance,” that miracles in ge-
neral, unless accompanied with predictions,
may deceive the spectators, how are “lying
“wonders” to be distinguished from any
others?

The author of “The Diffonance” reproaches
the advocates of the truth of the Gospel with
being unable to adduce any demonstrative
proof of its divine authority, and affirms, that

he has learnt from the ^b“only infallible authority the direct contrary.” We are then to consider whether completed prophecy has in it the nature of demonstrative evidence. “Demonstration,” according to the definition by Lockeⁱ, “is the showing the agreement or disagreement of two ideas by the intervention of one or more proofs, which have a constant, immutable, and visible connection one with another.” It is evident from this definition, that we are removed by the author of “The Diffonance” into a very different sphere of objects, the relation of which to each other is determined in a different manner from that by which the reality of the facts of a written history is ascertained. We are required to compare together a prophecy and its accomplishment, and to observe their discrepancy, or agreement. But in this comparison we are not to shew the agreement of two things by the intervention of a third, and not to determine the equality, but the identity of both. This however is the last process of the enquiry. We must previously know that the prophecy is not a contemporary ab-

^b Diffonance, Pref. p. vi.

ⁱ Essay on the Human Understanding, book iv. ch. 15. §. 1.

tract of the history. Besides, there is no essential repugnance in their natures between a false prophecy, and the alledged facts to which it is said to relate. In matters of quantity, the absurdity or impossibility at which we arrive in our conclusions, shew the errors of our reasoning; but the obscurity of prophecy does not confine the enquirer to one conclusion, and exclude every other. The discovery of truth and falsehood may result from different modes of reasoning; but a difference in the essential properties of one set of subjects prevents us from transferring a mode of investigation, which is adapted to determine their truth or falsehood, to others, of which it is not the appropriate instrument.

The author of "The Dissonance," the boldness of whose assertions increases with the deficiency of his proofs, avers, that the orthodox religion, established by Constantine, is an idolatrous superstition, an apostasy from the religion of Jesus Christ, which it has supplanted; that it is the apostasy predicted by St. Paul and our Saviour, that it was occasioned by "turning away their ears from the truth, and listening to fables, and believing falsehoods," "circumstances of the predic-

“ tion, which, if taken together, cannot have
 “ been fulfilled, unless fables and falsehoods
 “ are at least intermixed with disregarded
 “ truth in those writings, to which the church
 “ of Constantine hath in all ages appealed, as
 “ containing the grounds and foundation of
 “ every doctrine she hath taught^k.” The whole
 of the argument then, as directed to the ques-
 tion of the alteration of the canon of Scrip-
 ture, may be thus briefly represented. Mira-
 cles, unaccompanied with prophecy, are said
 to be fictitious ; those books, which contain
 miracles of this kind, may not be genuine, or
 their authenticity may be suspected in any
 part. It is said, that an apostasy took place,
 at an early period, from the pure religion of
 Jesus Christ ; that the apostates were, the
 members of the church established by Con-
 stantine ; that they were influenced by “ fa-
 “ bles” and falsehoods ; that these “ fables”
 must have been contained in the present vo-
 lume of the New Testament ; that we are to
 separate the false miracles from the true, and
 the mythological interpolations from the ge-
 nuine writings, and the remainder will be the
 books of pure revelation, cleared from corrupt

^k Diffonance, p. 26.

additions by the direction of prophetic intimations alone, without the assistance of any external evidence.

Such then are the expedients, which it is necessary to employ when we attempt to select our own grounds of belief. The Almighty, we may be assured, has established the connection between the proof and the thing to be believed, which cannot be broken with impunity. We cannot say that we will believe on this kind of evidence, and on no other, or that we will reject one portion, and adopt the remainder, without believing, either upon less evidence than is afforded, or than ought to be required, or upon evidence, which, having no appropriate reference to the thing whose existence or properties we admit, is equivalent to no evidence whatever. Even to affect habitually a fastidious scepticism in matters where the proof is sufficient and appropriate, is to trifle dangerously with the understanding, and is an act not destitute of criminality. The mind soon loses its power of discriminating between the various degrees and kinds of evidence which should authorize assent, till it is at last characterized by a sort of credulous fatuity. It will not be easy, and at length not possible, to return at pleasure from

the defence of paradoxes, or the structure of hypothesis, to the exercise of correct judgment; and the faculty, the use of which has been long perverted, will be found at last to be irrecoverably impaired: and, according to the language of revelation, which expresses not only the sentence of the Almighty upon this abuse of the intellectual powers, but also the general conclusion of a just philosophy, that voluntary deception is destined to terminate in believing a lie.

SERMON III.

PET. i. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

WHETHER the Apostle intended to allude to the same species of falsehood, which St. Paul expresses by the same term, when he says, that some would turn “unto fables,” it is not necessary to determine. There is indeed this difference, that what St. Paul describes as future, St. Peter speaks of as already existing and operating. The author of “The Diffonance” is of opinion, that St. Paul refers, prophetically, to certain forged and spurious writings, and to corruptions of the Scriptures, which should appear, and which were to be instrumental in producing the apostasy, as he calls it, of the church of Constantine from the pure religion of Jesus Christ. He insists upon the probability, that the Scriptures were interpolated in the second and third centuries, when certain pseudo-evangelical books

were thought to have been fabricated. It is represented as a practice at this period “ so
“ common amongst several, who called them-
“ selves Christians, to produce entire pieces of
“ their own, or others’ forgery, under the
“ name of any writer they pleased, that, if
“ what we call the scriptures of the New Tes-
“ tament were not so tampered with, they
“ are almost the only writings upon the same
“ subject, of those early times, which have
“ escaped free.” It will therefore be neces-
sary to examine, whether the same causes, to
which the composition of such writings is to
be ascribed, operated towards the corruption
of the sacred writings; whether such forged
writings were ever substituted wholly, or in
part, for the acknowledged records of Chris-
tianity; and, whether there is any ground to
suppose, that they, who composed, or they,
who used these forged works, extended the
imposition to the falsification of the genuine
Scriptures.

“ Irenæus,” it is said, “ informs us, that
“ the different sectarists of those early ages
“ had published an innumerable multitude of
“ apocryphal and spurious scriptures to asto-
“ nish the weak and ignorant.” The mode
of quoting and applying these words might

induce the reader to conclude, that the astonishment of the weak and ignorant was the sole object of the sectarists of that age; that they were satisfied with an inglorious triumph of this kind; that the embarrassment and perplexity of ignorance and imbecillity was the sole reward which they expected from their laborious frauds. It is however evident, that this could neither be the intention of the Father, nor is it indeed the import of his words. He has simply described the effect of these writings, and the kind of persons whose minds they influenced, without assigning any motives to the authors. But were our adversary more correct in assigning motives for these corruptions, the corruptions would scarcely have been extended to the Scriptures, merely for the sake of deluding such guardians of their integrity and purity as the weak and ignorant.

If he admits the authority of Tertullian to be valid in one part of his narrative, when he relates, that ^a an Asiatic Priest had been detected in “ascribing a work, entirely his own, “to St. Paul,” we may justly expect the declaration of the sequel, that the offender was

^a Lardner, vol. ii. p. 285.

deposed, and by those persons who had the same veneration, as *he* professed, for the character of the Apostle, and whose worldly interests and religious opinions were the same.

That they, who had the temerity to forge, would interpolate a writing, is perhaps a plausible presumption. But the authors of such books would scarcely extend their fraudulent innovations to the Scriptures, because alterations, favourable to their particular opinions, could not always be reduced to the compass of a few supplemental interpolations. When a new system of doctrine was to be framed, the foundation must have been broader and deeper than the insertion of a short passage, or a single sentence. These persons therefore composed express treatises, in which they might inculcate their tenets at large. It might have been perhaps more easy to mislead the ancient Christians, *for a time*, by the production of a new volume, than by recent additions to the original collection of the sacred writings already in their hands. When an evangelist or an apostle had committed his work to the custody of his converts, it had, we may suppose, its due complement and full perfection of parts. Nothing could subsequently be added or substituted, or taken

away, without some dishonest purpose. Whenever such an alteration took place, it might have been known, because it admitted of ready proof; and must have been known, because the Christian converts were qualified, merely by habitual perusal, to detect the innovation. They did not however authorize the inventions of men, who professed the same sentiments with themselves, and they were able to discriminate between supposititious and genuine writings.

It is said, that there is an interpolation in the Gospel of St. Luke of so late a date as the third century, and that “ we have the clearest conviction of it ;” “ that Origen informs us, “ that several believers were offended with “ that part of St. Luke’s Gospel, wherein our “ Lord promises the penitent thief upon the “ cross, that he should that day be with him “ in paradise ; that they declared, that the “ passage was not in the older copies, but a “ late addition of some interpolators.” “ It is “ clear,” says the author of *The Diffonance*^b, “ that as the doctrine of an intermediate state “ of purgatory and paradise gained ground in “ the orthodox church *after the second cen-*

^b *Diffonance*, p. 29.

“*tury*, that particular passage was interpolated to give the sanction of holy Scripture “to the newly received doctrine.” If this interpolation were introduced before, or soon after, the second century, Origen would scarcely have related the fumes of others, when he could have ascertained, if not by his own knowledge, certainly by testimony contemporary with the interpolation, whether it were a genuine part of the Gospel, or not. If it had existed, continues the objector, in the time of Tertullian, it could not have been omitted “by him,” when writing his treatise upon the Soul, as it would “have settled the “point beyond dispute.” If we consider the tenour of Tertullian’s discourse upon the Soul, we may perhaps discover a probable reason for the omission of a passage apparently so well adapted to his subject. When he refers to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, his object is, not “to consider expressly the “intermediate state of the souls of bad and “good men after death,” but to shew the nature of the soul in general, and to derive from thence a proof of its corporeality^d. The pro-

^c Diffonance, p. 29.

^d See below the passage of Irenæus for the meaning of this term. It by no means implies mortality.

mise of our Saviour gave no direct information in what state the soul would then be, but merely indicated to what place it should be consigned. It may then appear, that the citation of the passage in question might, or might not, be introduced into the treatise on the Soul; that as the introduction of it would not have strengthened, so the omission could not weaken, the argument; and the existence of the passage at the time of Tertullian can scarcely be disputed on the ground, that it was not adduced, when inapplicable to the reasoning of the writer. But this Father had composed another work, in which we might have expected to find it, and probably should have found it, if that treatise had been preserved. Indeed it is most probable, that his lost discourse “on Paradise”^e originated in the very passage, whose authenticity is questioned. The authority therefore of Tertullian is not in favour of the hypothesis of interpolation.

That Irenæus also should not “take the least notice of so very remarkable a circumstance^f,” is to be ascribed to the same rea-

^e “Habes etiam de Paradiso a nobis libellum.” Tertull. De Anim. §. 35. ad fin.

^f Dissonance, p. 29.

son as the silence of Tertullian. The course of his argument did not lead to its consideration and insertion. "Our Lord," says Irenæus, "has taught us most fully in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that the soul does not only remain, (not passing from body to body,) but also retains the figure of the body to which it is adapted, and that it recollects the works which it has done here, and now ceases to perform." In this parable "it is manifestly declared, that the soul continues, and does not migrate from body to body, and preserves the resemblance of the man, by which it is recognized; that it remembers those things which are in the world; that Abraham possessed a prophetic power, and that to each nation is allotted a suitable habitation, even before the judgments." I am not further concerned^h with these opinions, than to state, that the principal object of this reasoning was to prove, that the soul did not leave the original body, to which it was conjoined, in or-

^g Irenæus cont. Hæref. lib. ii. c. 34.

^h The controversy on the nature of the soul originated in a pamphlet written by H. Dodwell. His opponents were, S. Clarke, Whitby, Norris of Bemerton, and Chifhull.

der to be united to another. Of what use then would it have been to have alledged the passage of St. Luke? The promise of an abode in paradise did not imply the state and condition of the soul when it should be transferred thither. The mention therefore of this place was omitted for the obvious reason, that it was not suited to the purpose of the writer.

With respect to the silence of Justin Martyr, it may not be easy to explain the reason why he has not referred to this passage of St. Luke, although ⁱ“ he himself, Irenæus, and “ Tertullian, have quoted almost every other “ relating to the crucifixion.” If the fact of the crucifixion be taken as the subject with which it is thought to be so intimately connected, that it could not be omitted, if it were there related, the circumstance respecting the penitent thief does not constitute a necessary appendage to the principal transaction, and, of course, the omission of it in the argument of Justin does not bring any imputation upon the genuineness of the passage.

When we recur to Origen's own account of this part of St. Luke's Gospel, it is simply

ⁱ Diffonance, p. 29.

this: * “ This saying of our Lord has so disturbed some persons, as appearing to them “ incongruous or dissonant, that they have “ ventured of themselves to suspect, that it “ was added to the Gospel by certain ¹ falsaries.” Hence it is, at length; that we are to derive “ the clearest conviction ” that it is an interpolation, and that “ some persons declared, that it was not in the older copies.”

But the author of “ The Dissonance ” is not satisfied with producing one suspected passage, as a reason for extending his suspicions to others, but at once affirms, that the testimony of the witnesses ^m “ cannot be depended upon “ respecting the writings of the several apostles and apostolic men, whose names they “ bear.” He attempts to prove their incompetency generally by the following canon; that, as there are “ such very extraordinary, “ useless, ill-supported, improbable facts in “ the Gospels of Matthew and John,” which he supposes to have been the composition of

* Lardner’s Credibility, vol. ii. p. 624. The version of Lardner is slightly altered.

¹ The word *falsaries* I find in Cockburn’s Historical Dissertation on the Books of the New Testament, and it obviates the necessity of a great multiplication of words.

^m Dissonance, p. 36—33.

persons “infected with the grossest superstitious credulity,” so no “superstitious and credulous person” can be admitted to be a proper witness of the authenticity of any writings, in which such facts are related. Let us apply this rule to the writings of the martyr Justin. That he employed an injudicious mode of vindicating to the Romans the fact of our Saviour’s birth against the appearance of novelty, by producing analogies from their own mythology, is, I think, the extreme point, to which the accusation can be extended; but it may be better to hear his own explanation of the use which he made of the mythic system. “But be this known to you,” says heⁿ, “that whatever things we declare, having learned them from Christ, and the prophets who preceded him, are alone true, and more ancient than all writers; and we do not think ourselves worthy of regard because we say the same things as those writers, but because we speak what is true.” Justin pursued his apology in this manner, because it was his opinion that the sentiments of Plato were to be traced in the writers of the Old Testament, and that certain parts of the hea-

ⁿ Apol. i. p. 35. ed. Thirlb.

then mythology originated in the perversion of the language of the prophets respecting our Saviour, through the influence of evil dæmons. But that he should “illustrate and “plead for the toleration, by the Heathen “Emperors, of the orthodox doctrine of the “generation of the Word, because of its resemblance to the fabulous origin of their “own deities, and justify the doctrine of the “incarnation by its similarity to the births of “Æsculapius and Hercules, and the other illustrious god-men of Pagan mythology,” and at the same time “account for this similarity between the orthodox doctrines and “the fables of the poets, by asserting, that the “poets delivered them through the inspiration of dæmons and evil geniuses, in order “to prejudice the world against the reception “of those orthodox tenets, when the time “should come for their promulgation,” is to attribute to the ancient Father inconsistency, aggravated by absurdity. The only passage, to which the author of “The Diffonance” may be supposed to refer, is the following, in the first Apology of the Father: “They, who “teach the mythic compositions of the poets, “do not present to the youth who are instructed any means of attaining to the truth;

and I prove that “ they were uttered to deceive and seduce mankind through the agency of evil dæmons.” I conceive that it will not be inferred from this passage, that the belief in the influence of dæmons argues incapacity, or indeed the want of any quality, which can detract from the competency of Justin’s testimony respecting the authenticity of the Gospels,

The evidence of Irenæus also is thought to be invalidated by a puerile description of the state of the earth during the Millenium, a subject where fancy and imagination might expatiate without violating any other rules than those of probability, and where the misrepresentation of actual facts could not have any place whatever.

The testimony of Tertullian is weakened, it is said, because, in his treatise on the Soul, he relates concerning a person, with whom he had been acquainted, some extraordinary circumstances, which occurred after death. The inference is, that we must suspect his testimony respecting the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels. There is not here, however, a sufficient indication of a credulous facility in receiving such accounts, and we are not to infer that this was the propensity of his

mind. The disqualification of the evidence of a witness must principally proceed from some moral incapacitation ; but superstition and credulity are not connected with any thing except passive imposition. But in what manner is the imagination to be affected, or superstition and credulity to be operated upon, by such simple facts as these ; that the Gospels of Tertullian's age were those of the preceding times, and that such persons, with such appellations, were generally reputed to be the authors ? This is what the Father believed and asserted, with ample means of information in his power to justify his belief, and substantiate his assertions. But the credulity of Tertullian certainly did not appear even in the examination of *such* subjects. He did not receive a forgery ascribed to St. Paul as an authentic writing of that apostle ; and he knew how to vindicate the genuineness of the entire Gospel of St. Luke against the charge of corruption adduced by Marcion. The question then is, did he in the case of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John submit his judgment to the authority of the credulous and superstitious, and the cunning, and exercise it only when he received that of St. Luke ? It seems, however, that Tertullian is to be considered as a

credulous, superstitious writer, and that his evidence cannot be depended upon respecting the authenticity of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, which contain such facts as he was always inclined to believe “very extraordinary, ill supported, useless, and improbable.” With respect to the question of authenticity, he could not be influenced by superstition or credulity to ascribe the Gospels to one person rather than to another. Had his credulity been as great as is represented, the spurious gospels would have been more acceptable to an intellect, in which the power of distinguishing fiction from truth was so much impaired.

The preceding reasoning is followed by a false but popular analogical illustration. “When no court of justice,” it is said, “will admit the testimony of witnesses, who are themselves notoriously convicted of the same crime of which the defendant is accused, how can it be expected that any reasonable unprejudiced person should admit similar evidence to be of weight in a case of the greatest importance possible, not to himself only, but to the whole human race?” It is here first assumed, that the Gospels contain ill supported and improbable facts, and then

it is asserted that those, who do *not* think them improbable and ill supported, are unworthy of credit on that account. This audacious proposition is supposed to be confirmed by the preceding analogy. But let us observe the practical effect of the principles of "The Dissonance" in the very example which is produced to illustrate and confirm this argument. A witness lays his hand on the Gospels, and attests the truth of his allegations by professing, as a sanction of his own veracity, a belief in the authority of these sacred books. If the judge maintained the doctrines of "The Dissonance," he must, consistently with such opinions, reject the evidence altogether, or represent the witness as unworthy of attention on account of his credulous weakness in paying any regard to such "superstitious, ill supported, improbable" narratives.

Credulity and superstition often prevail in minds which are not weak, and in moral dispositions which are characterized by rigorous veracity. But to represent the martyr Justin as an unfit witness of the authenticity of the Scriptures, because he believed in the agency of dæmons, is to assign a cause which has no relation to the imputed effect. Were such

reasoning admitted, it would invalidate all the histories of our own country, which preceded the last century, and indeed those of Europe to a still later period. The great Lord Bacon was himself a believer in the influence of ° dæmons, and in the use of the study of reformed † astrology. By that species, which he

° Cæterum sobria circa illos (Angelos scil.) inquisitio, quæ vel per rerum corporearum scalam ad eorum naturam pernoscendam ascendat, vel in anima humana, veluti in speculo, eam intueatur, neutiquam prohibetur. *Idem* de spiritibus statuendum immundis, qui a statu suo deciderunt. *Consortium cum iis, atque usus operæ eorum illicitus est; multo magis qualiscunque cultus vel veneratio.* At contemplatio et cognitio illorum naturæ, potestatis, illusionum, non solum ex locis scripturæ sacre, sed ex ratione, aut experientia, haud postrema pars est sapientiæ spiritualis. Sic certe Apostolus, stratagematum ejus non ignari sumus. Ac non minus dæmonum naturam investigare in theologia naturali conceditur, quam venenorum in physica, aut vitiorum in ethica. De Augment. Scient. lib. ii. c. 2. p. 97.

† Adhibetur autem astrologia fana; ad prædictiones fidentius, ad electiones cautius, ad utraque autem intra terminos debitos. Prædictiones fieri possint, de cometis futuris, qui (ut nostra fert conjectura) prænunciari possunt: et de omni genere meteororum, de diluviis—bellis, seditionibus, sectis, transmigrationibus populorum; denique de omnibus rerum vel naturalium vel civilium motibus, aut innovationibus majoribus. De Augm. Scient. lib. iii. c. 4. p. 103, 104.

It is curious to examine the constituents of the astrolo-

distinguiſhes as the aſtrologia fana, he allows may be foretold, not only phyſical events, as meteors, deluges, and tempeſts, but alſo wars, ſeditious, the riſe of religious ſects, and popular^a emigrations.

gia fana. *Primo*, in aſtrologiam fanam recipiatur doctrina de commixtionibus radiorum, conjunctionibus ſcilicet, et oppoſitionibus et reliquis ſyzygiis, ſive aſpectibus planetarum inter ſe: planetarum autem per ſigna zodiaci pertranſitum, et locationem ſub iiſdem ſignis, etiam huic parti de commixtionibus radiorum assignamus.

Secundo, recipiantur acceſſiones ſingulorum planetarum propius ad perpendicularum aut receſſiones ab ipſo, ſecundum regionum climata.

Tertio, recipiantur apogæa et perigæa planetarum cum debita diſquiſitione, ad quæ pertineat planetæ vigor in ſe ipſo, ad quæ vicinitas ad nos. *Quarto*, recipiantur (ut ſummatim dicamus) omnia reliqua accidentia motus planetarum. *Quinto*, recipiantur, quæ naturas ſtellarum, ſive erraticarum, ſive fixarum, in propria ſua eſſentia et aſtutivitate, reſecare et detegere ullo modo queant; qualis magnitudo; qualis color et aſpectus; qualis ſcintillatio et vibratio luminis &c.

Poſtremo, recipiantur etiam ex traditione naturæ et inclinationes planetarum particulares, atque etiam ſtellarum fixarum; quæ, quandoquidem magno conſenſu tradantur, non leviter (præterquam ubi cum phyſicis rationibus plane diſcordant) rejiciendæ ſunt. *Atque ex talibus obſervationibus coagmentatur aſtrologia fana*; et ſecundum eas tantum, ſchemata cæli et componere et interpretari oportet. De Augm. Scient. lib. iii. cap. 4. p. 102, 133.

^a De Augment. Scient. lib. iii. c. 4.

But credulity and superstition are not the greatest defects in the testimony of the ancient Christians. They disregarded "honour and veracity (as it is said) in whatever concerned the cause of their particular system." "They have destroyed (according to the assertion of their enemies) every writing upon the subject of Christianity, which they could not by some means or other apply to the support of their own superstition." The writings of "the many," alluded to in St. Luke's preface, are supposed to be some of those which have been destroyed; and, from the multiplicity of these and other works, the pernicious "industry" of the Fathers has been denominated by the author of "The Diffonance," as, if it were true, it might justly be denominated, "singular." But we are not informed that there was any thing singular in the mode of preserving the Gospel of St. Luke which was contemporary. This Evangelist however merely intimates, that others had written upon the same subject before, and that his inducement to compose another narrative was, a desire to communicate his own correct information to his own converts. He sent his history into the world to be received or rejected on the same grounds as the others,

relating to the same events, were to be received or rejected.

The names however of the authors of the various books are not preserved, although the author of "The Diffonance" has computed the number thus suppressed with a ^r minuteness and particularity, which has no foundation in the history of the time. He must therefore be regarded as attempting not to supply by speculation the events of that period, but to forge annals to support an hypothesis. But in proportion as he aggravates the criminality of the early Fathers, by multiplying the number of gospels originally written, in the same proportion does he augment the difficulty of their project. If such books were received as the rule of faith, and consequently preserved in the different Christian churches that were founded at that time, the difficulty of destroying them is still further increased. Could they annihilate, do we suppose, all the Gospels used in the Christian assemblies at the places specified in "The Diffonance," ^s "at Jerusalem, in Samaria, Phoenice, Syria, in every province of Asia Mi-

^r Evanfon's Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man, p. 27.

^s Ibid.

“ nor, and in many cities of Macedonia and “ Greece ? ” We may however enquire, why they permitted the spurious and apocryphal work of their own respective periods to descend, even in fragments, to these times. Is it not extraordinary, that this intention, pursued from the age of one Father to the age of another, should have been a discovery reserved for the present generation. Such writings, and particularly those received by the early Christian churches, if ever they had an existence, would have been in the careful custody of those who used them; and they would have maintained their credit on the ground of their original reception. Surely we are justified in expecting some evidence that such books were written, if we are deprived of the opportunity of examining their contents. The whole hypothesis however of “ The Dissonance ” respecting the destruction, or even the existence of those books, rests entirely with the author of that work; who produces no authority for his assertions, and therefore the denial of the truth of the supposition is at least as valid against it as the assumption of its reality can be in its favour. The hypothesis is of large extent. It involves various propositions; that twenty gospels were composed at the time of which

St. Luke speaks in his proem ; that, at a distance of half a century, sixteen more were added to these ; that the Christians, and particularly the Christian Fathers, were instrumental at least in the destruction of these writings ; that the books thus destroyed contained facts or doctrines contradictory to those adopted by the Fathers. Of these positions he produces no proof, not even the names of the authors, on whose imaginary testimony he relies so securely. The Greek and Roman histories, and indeed every history that was ever written, might be invalidated by supposing in the same manner the existence of historians, whose works and names are now lost, who might have given different accounts of the transactions of those nations from any that are recorded by the writers, whose histories we now possess.

The number of gospels, supposed once to have existed, is derived from the unsupported conjecture, that each Christian church had an original gospel, composed for its peculiar use. Yet † Eusebius relates, and his authority will avail where it has not been questioned, and it will not be questioned merely because he was

† Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. c. 37.

an ecclesiastic of rank, and an ecclesiastical historian, that in the second century great numbers of persons^u, “disciples of the Apostles, travelled over the world, building up churches where the Apostles had before laid the foundations, and preaching the faith of Christ in other places, which had never heard of it before, carrying along with them the written Gospels.” This testimony, then, directly subverts this position, (and the testimony is without suspicion, because it was never designed to be thus applied,) that, as the number of churches increased, distinct gospels were written for their instruction by persons, who, as the author of “The Dissonance” expresses their qualifications, had been “educated from their infancy in the religion of Jesus Christ, as taught by the Apostles themselves.” And further, Marcion, who had an opportunity of knowing what other works there were, which in authority might vie with that of the acknowledged Gospels, was reduced to the necessity of adapting the Gospel of St. Luke to his own views and opinions.

Neither can we obtain any information respecting these supposed writings from any evi-

^u See Richardson on the Canon of the New Test.

dence respecting their destruction. When copies of writings were to be multiplied by transcription, the number of copies would be in proportion to the esteem in which the work was held; and the desire of obtaining a copy would of course be general, not merely as a matter of curiosity or learning, but from a fear of mistaking the rule of Christian conduct. Any defect therefore, either in the importance of the contents, or in the assurances respecting its authenticity, or the appearance of better writings, would make the work itself to be less regarded, and of course cause copies to be less sought after, and in time to be neglected, and at length to be lost altogether. If this reasoning will not account for the loss of ancient works, as not probable in itself, in what manner could the Fathers proceed to effect the positive destruction of any writings, which derived their value from the instruction and education of their authors in the Christian religion, “as taught by the Apostles?”

It is to be remarked, that, although the accusation extends to a body of persons, the Fathers of the church, and their successors, yet not one is specified by name who is said by the author of “The Dissonance” to have suggested, or to have attempted to execute,

this most extraordinary project. How then shall we account for this subtle reserve? Only one reason for it can be produced; that we know enough of the biography of the Fathers to repel a charge so malevolent. But our information respecting the early periods of the history of Christianity is not so complete as to enable us always to oppose licentious suppositions with direct facts. We are obliged therefore to have recourse to probability, where proofs cannot be had; and this has already occurred too often, and must occur again more frequently, from the nature of this controversy. We may therefore enquire, in what situation would those churches have been left which had been accustomed to use the writings that the Fathers had destroyed? Would they adopt others, authorized by persons who were not disciples of the Apostles, and silently acquiesce in the loss of works, which were written by those who were known to be so, and when so few years had elapsed since they had received them from sincere depositaries of the faith?

We may also enquire, of what nature were those books, which, by an edict of Diocletian, at the commencement of the fourth century, were demanded of the Christians by the impe-

rial inquisitors. The surrender of their sacred books was the object of this law, which was enforced by sanguinary penalties. But whether the Roman emperors persecuted the possessors of one set of books, or the Fathers employed subtlety to destroy another collection, neither the one nor the other were able to effect their intention. The inquisitors could not get into their power all the copies of these writings, nor the persons of all who used them. Had this been the consequence of such measures, it might have happened that the churches would have lost altogether, at this time, their copies of the sacred writings. The decree of Diocletian was executed in Gaul, in Africa, and in Palestine; but the traitors did not, as far as we know, vilify the authority of their books, even as a timid stratagem to preserve them, nor did they intimate in this apostasy any suspicion of a spurious original. Why should the Christians deliver their books with less reluctance to the officers of the Emperor, who could punish opposition with death, than to the Fathers and their agents, who could only offer in exchange spurious works for genuine, since we may be assured that they would not have been satisfied without having some substitute for the books which they had

surrendered? How the ancient Fathers could allow one work to be transmitted, and suppress another, of apparently higher authority, must be explained by some extraordinary influence, which it is not recorded they ever obtained over the minds of Christians in general. It should also be considered, that all the Fathers were not in public stations, and those who were could have had only a very limited sphere of power. Besides, the foundation of the authority which their writings have at present is chiefly derived from their proximity to the times concerning which they write; a circumstance which, during their lives, could not be the source of any extraordinary or particular influence, as they must have only participated in it with others their contemporaries.

Nothing of this kind would have enabled them to transmit to posterity a set of spurious evangelical histories, which might have been confuted by records, the authenticity of which might have been confirmed by persons, who had the same opportunities of examining them as the Fathers themselves had.

To provide for the transmission of their own works would have required the formation of a most singular confederacy. They did not

however succeed in this ; for most of the valuable compositions of the early times are lost, notwithstanding the interest which the orthodox evidently had, according to the hypothesis of "The Diffonance," in preserving them from neglect or injury.

It is more than implied in another objection, that the Fathers insidiously permitted "the works of a few other writers to be transmitted, who were all of them not only converts from Paganism, but men who had been educated and well instructed in the philosophic schools of the later Platonists and Pythagoreans." The author of "The Diffonance" solicitously insists upon the authority of a celebrated writer on ecclesiastical history for affirming, that "the Christian teachers, who had been instructed in the schools of sophists and rhetoricians, transferred the arts of their masters to the Christian discipline, and adopted that mode of contending with their adversaries, in which truth was not so much their aim as victory ; and they were confirmed in this practice by the Platonists, who asserted, that a man did no wrong who supported truth, when hard pressed, by deceit and lies. This vicious eagerness not to vanquish their adversaries

“ by reason and fair argument, but to overthrow and confound them, produced so many books, falsely attributed to persons of great eminence and renown, to oppose to their antagonists.” Whatever absurd opinions the latter Platonists conjoined with the profession of Christianity, or whatever unworthy methods they might employ in their controversies, their testimony is not affected where no philosophical or theological subtlety was to be discussed, no interpretation of Scripture proposed, and where particularly no dispute existed concerning the subject of their evidence. In this case it is of no moment whether or not the witness were a philosopher before he was a Christian. His philosophy was an instrument, which, if he had been disposed to use it, he could not apply to the simple fact of what books of the New Testament were received in his time. But the martyr Justin, although a philosopher, was not one of the latter Platonists; and what books he considered as authentic is not determined by a formal or authoritative enumeration, but his testimony is collected from incidental citations introduced, as various topics suggested their application.

It has been asserted by the author of the

“ Free Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers of
“ the early Ages,” that forged “ books are
“ applied to the defence of Christianity by the
“ most eminent Fathers of the same ages, as
“ true and genuine writings, and of equal au-
“ thority with the Scriptures themselves*.”

This assertion has not indeed remained till this time without some examination; but it may not be useless to enquire, how it is supported in the instance of one Father, whose valuable testimony and extensive learning have been depreciated by this censure; I mean, Clement of Alexandria.

The charge, which I propose to repel on the ground of express enquiry, is this; that Clement has quoted the Preaching of Peter as authentic Scripture, and has associated the verses of the Sibyll with the prophecies of the Old Testament. This Father has frequently appealed to the first Epistle of Peter; and, from a comparison of his mode of citing the genuine writings of the Apostle himself with that of the work, entitled, the Preaching of Peter, it appears, that he did not consider the latter as authentic Scripture. He cites the first Epistle of Peter either without any in-

* Dr. Middleton, *Introductio. Disc. vol. i. p. 75.*

introduction^y, or with the simple addition^z of his name, or with the preface, "this is chiefly "to be had in mind, which was said^a holily," or by the Holy Spirit; the "Teacher says^b," a name which in his work with this inscription he ascribes to the Lord; "the Lord "says^c;" "the admirable Peter says^d;" "Peter in the Epistle^e;" "Peter in the Acts^f." On the other hand, in the various passages, where he cites the Preaching of Peter, the extracts are not introduced with any terms expressing peculiar approbation, and much less which ascribe to them any authority. The form is universally either "the Preaching of "Peter," or "Peter in the Preaching," unaccompanied with any of those emphatic additions, which he uses in speaking of the canonical Epistle. Besides, he is always cautious to mark the citation from the Preaching; whereas he is not always solicitous to shew that his citations from the authentic writings are to be found there particularly, but only

^y Clem. Alexandrin. p. 40.

^z Ib. p. 103.

^a Ib. p. 244.

^b Ib. p. 250.

^c Ib. p. 261.

^d Ib. p. 457.

^e Ib. p. 473. 525.

^f Ib. p. 646.

in some part of the general collection of the inspired writings^s.

With respect to the insertion of passages from the Sibylline verses, it cannot be alleged that Clement has ranked them in authority with the prophecies of the Old Testament, although he mentions them together. "Let the Sibyll first sing to us the hymn of "salvation:" and, after some remarks on the citation, he proceeds; "But Jeremiah the "prophet, full of all wisdom, or rather the "Holy Spirit, speaking through Jeremiah, "points out God to us." Wherever this Father traces a similarity of sentiment, he transcribes promiscuously from sacred and profane authors; and out of fourteen passages of the Sibylline verses, two only accompany citations from Scripture: so that we cannot deduce from their combination in this manner with Scripture any supposed equality in authority which we may not, with as much propriety, attribute to his other illustrations of the same subject, adduced at the same time from Homer, Orpheus, and Xenophon.

^s It does not seem "so difficult" as Lardner thought "to decide what authority Clement assigned to this "book." Vol. ii. p. 239.

Another circumstance, supposed to counteract the testimony of the Fathers relative to the books of Scripture which were received in their respective ages, is discovered ^h “ in the “ pretensions of the Fathers of the orthodox “ church of the latter half of the second century, and of the third, and of the members “ of the same church after it was established “ by Constantine during several centuries, to “ the supernatural power of working miracles.” Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea, who lived in the middle of the third century, obtained, from a reputed power of performing miracles, the appellation of Thaumaturgus. But if the Fathers of the latter half of the second century, and of the third, had possessed the same power, the cognominal appellation would have conferred little or no distinction upon one who only participated in a common gift. He does not affirm, in the fragments of his own writings, that he performed any miracles ; and his life was written by a person who lived a century subsequent to these times, and who writes in a style which renders the truth of the whole narrative suspicious. The Fathers themselves do not profess ever to have had

^h Diffonance, p. 37.

this power, although they relate its effects, as matters of history, when exercised by others. The life of Chrysostom has been composed in a similar manner. He avers in his own works, with much repetition, that miracles were no longer performed; and yet his biographer specifies in detail miracles of various kinds, which the Father is said to have wrought for the benefit of the sick.

It may be difficult to ascertain what period is comprised in those "several centuries" before alluded to, which succeeded the age of Constantine. In the eighth century, in the time of Gregory I. "the miraculous powers" had ceased in the church by his own reluctant acknowledgment. Even at the close of the fourth century Chrysostom says, "But because miracles are not wrought now, do not therefore conclude that none were wrought at that time; for then they were useful, but now they are not useful:" and in another place he asserts, "God has now ceased to work miracles." I conceive however, that when this Father relates that "the ashes of the holy martyrs repel dæmons," we are not to infer that there is any contradiction in his positions. The relics of martyrs, whether they are said to have counter-

acted the influence of dæmons, or to have cured diseases, were still never considered as miracles, or as exceptions to the cessation of miracles, or as contributing to the diffusion of Christianity, as proofs of its truth. The same Father who records the property of repelling dæmons, supposed to be inherent in the relics, and even communicated to the receptacles of their ashes, testifies also, that miracles were no longer needful ; so that we cannot regard this power as any thing more than a kind of honorary and inferior energy, or an attribute derived from the veneration of the faithful, and which extended no farther than to augment the reputation of the respective martyr.

It appears therefore that the Fathers did not pretend to the “supernatural power of “working miracles” at the periods which “The Dissonance” assigns, nor indeed at any other whatever. The conclusion also, which we are required to draw, is ; that the testimony of those, who pretended to miraculous powers, is not credible, not merely with respect to the existence of such powers at that time, and in those persons, but with respect to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament ; a conclusion which, if correct,

would still fall short of its object, for other evidence would remain after the invalidation of that of the Christian Fathers.

The authenticity of the books of the New Testament is thus impeached by a tenor of argument so dark and devious, that the investigation, with whatever professions it may be accompanied, will convince us, that truth was not the object of the enquiry, unless fallacy is to be considered as the most approved guide to certainty, and sophistry the most faithful auxiliary of reason. To cite the opinion of one Father on a subject of inferior importance, and not connected with facts, for the purpose of invalidating his testimony upon every point of great moment, and with the means of full information; to attribute to the Fathers in general the assumption of the power of working miracles, that he may ground an indefinite accusation of their moral incompetency as witnesses; to represent as facts what is not recorded in any history; to advance as truth what is only remotely probable; are arts, which can be employed by a disputant only with the irrational expectation, that persons in general would complacently receive, without suspicion, as firmly established truths, re-

fults, to which it can be objected, that they have been obtained by means, the use of which is essentially inconsistent with personal veracity and integrity.

SERMON IV.

2 PET. i. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

DURING the interval between the ascension of our Lord and the publication of the Gospels in writing, the Christian dispensation remained among the converts in the form of tradition. As it was at first orally communicated to them, it was subject to many of the imperfections of oral communication. Something might have been added, or suppressed, or misrepresented, or misunderstood, according to the prejudices, or zeal, or weakness of converts, or the artifices of false teachers, when the only standard to which they could refer any variations, either in the doctrine or the history, was the recollection of one party, opposed to the alledged contrary recollection of another. The Apostles indeed received a promise, that the Holy Ghost should bring all things, which Jesus Christ had said on earth, to their

remembrance; but we have no authority to say, that this assistance was continued to other converts. We do not expect that the providence of God, which does not act in vain, should necessarily have interposed in this manner after the knowledge of the Gospel had been so widely diffused by its first teachers, who alone were favoured with supernatural strength of recollection. The extent of country, and the diversity of people to whom the Gospel had been communicated, ensured, in a great degree, truth and correctness, whenever it should be committed to writing. What the circumstances were which might suggest the necessity of perpetuating the facts and doctrines of Christianity in written records at one time rather than at another, we are not informed. St. Luke was induced to compose his Gospel by the appearance of other accounts of the same facts. The publication of other narratives by other teachers would make the converts of the Apostles also expect, that the system of their religion should be preserved in the same permanent manner by some of their original instructors. It is an enquiry therefore more curious than necessary, to determine precisely the respective dates of the first three Gospels. For, whether we adopt

the dates which contract, or those which enlarge, the interval between the ascension of our Lord and the appearance of the Gospels in writing, still Christianity had been preached for a period of sufficient duration to ensure the complete instruction of the new disciples in the nature of its doctrines, and the history of its author. We must suppose that the early teachers of this religion were qualified for their functions by the possession of accurate information on the topics peculiar to this religion. For we cannot imagine that, as far as correct knowledge and sincerity of intention were concerned, the qualifications for teaching could be in any respect inferior to those which would be required for writing a Gospel. We are told indeed, by the best testimony, what were the qualifications of the person who was admitted to participate in the labours of the Apostles. In supplying the place of the traitorous disciple, it was judged necessary that his successor should have a personal knowledge of our Saviour, his actions, and his teaching. “ Wherefore of these
“ men, which have companied with us all the
“ time that the Lord Jesus went in and out
“ among us, beginning from the baptism of
“ John, unto that same day that he was taken

“ up from us, must one be ordained to be a
“ witness with us of his resurrection ^a.” These qualifications are not to be restricted to the knowledge, by which they might be able to verify the identity of our Lord’s person. They were designed to include a perfect acquaintance with the history of our Saviour’s life, and of the transactions which related to him during his abode on earth, of his resurrection from death, of his ascension into heaven, of the doctrines which he communicated, and of the precepts which he enjoined. A perfect knowledge of all these important facts must of itself have imparted high authority to the preaching of the Apostles, and was intended to have a due and corresponding influence on their hearers. Their natural and uninspired testimony was not an ostensible instrument, liable to be superseded by others of greater utility and efficacy, on which their success principally and really depended. The requisites above described were considered as indispensable, notwithstanding the assistance which the successor of Judas would receive from the Holy Spirit, in common with the other Apostles.

^a Acts i. 21, 22.

In another view it appears extraordinary, that those men, who were qualified as eye-witnesses for preaching the Gospel, should afterwards find it expedient, through a consciousness of inadequate knowledge, to recur to documents of inferior authority as necessary for perfecting their brief histories. Their previous preaching furnished their converts with a standard, by which the accuracy and consistency of the written Gospel might be determined. They could not preach doctrines and relate facts personally, and afterwards record others, inconsistent with these, when the means of detection were obvious to all. The historical form given to the substance of their religion would enable the new disciples to recollect a greater portion of it, and with more correctness, than if it had consisted of a system of abstract doctrines and unconnected precepts. The occasions, on which our Lord's precepts were delivered, have a certain natural and necessary connection with the precepts themselves, that imprints them more permanently on the memory. . It is not necessary to determine whether the members of the newly-established churches received from heaven any peculiar aid, by which the naturally fugitive impressions of oral teaching might re-

main perfect in the recollection till the information was committed to writing. Without any intention of diminishing the measure of the promised gifts of the Holy Spirit, we need not insist upon the necessity of their communication in this instance, because the natural, although providential means, derived from a more early publication of the Gospels, were probably interposed before the evangelical traditions might require either renewal or correction. ^b Those writers, who assign dates to the first three Gospels at a considerable interval from the time of our Lord's ascension, oblige us to suppose, either that the primitive Christians could not be left to the sole direc-

^b The human motives for committing the Gospel to writing are well assigned by a friend, whose remarks I have inserted in another part of this Discourse; the Rev. R. Warner of Bath. "To me it appears, that the Gospels were written, not so much to correct existing errors, as to prevent future ones; to embody and perpetuate those facts and doctrines, the reality and truth of which the evangelical writers 'most surely believed,' and what they would of course be anxious to put together and deliver in a written form, for the use of their hearers and proselytes, as early as they conveniently could, that in case of their own departure the Christian system might remain with them perfect and complete. This has always weighed with me in adopting the hypothesis of the *earliest* dates of the Gospels."

tion of tradition for so long a time without the danger of their losing or impairing, through imperfect recollection, the essential doctrines of their religion, so as to be unable to ascertain clearly the truth and the correctness of the written documents, when they were delivered to the Christian churches; or else, that some supernatural assistance was afforded to strengthen their natural intellectual powers, both for receiving and retaining divine truth.

In a “Dissertation concerning the Origin and Composition of the three first canonical Gospels,” it is said, that the Apostles had made communications of some of the evangelical facts, of which they had been eye-witnesses. Their first communications, as we know from ^c Irenæus, were oral, and constituted the preaching by which they converted the nations to Christianity. Their written communications would naturally be addressed to those, who had been their hearers; to those, who would preserve what was written on account of their recollection of the effect which had been produced on themselves by what they had heard. It is not probable that the

^c Non enim per literas traditam illam (veritatem sc.) fed per vivam vocem. Adv. Hæref. lib. iii. c. 2.

Apostles would make communications, whatever others might do, without directing them to some useful or precise object. That object was, the confirmation of their converts in the Christian faith, which required the written to be no less satisfactory and complete than the oral communication, and perhaps nearly the same. Any hypothesis therefore must fail, which supposes, that the communications made by the Apostles were so imperfect as to form, "not a finished history," but only "materials for a history." On the contrary, it appears probable that the written apostolical communications were the present Gospels; and as perfect in form as was necessary for an historical composition, intended for the explanation and proof of the truth of the Christian dispensation, and the foundation and test of all future teaching. If there be any particular advantage in point of argument in the remoteness of the date of the facts upon which I have reasoned; I mean, the previous preaching of the Apostles; it reaches, like the hypothesis of the author to whom I am referring, much higher ^d "than that proof, which is " derived from ancient manuscripts, from an-

^d Letters, p. 15.

“cient versions, and from the quotations of
“the Fathers.”

The epistles of St. Paul uniformly allude to this preaching, and do not imply that the Greek converts had at that time been instructed by any other means. This is, we might suppose, an irrefragable argument of the precedence, in point of time, of the epistles of St. Paul to any of the written Gospels; and the Acts of the Apostles shew, in conformity with the language of St. Paul, that Christianity was first established in other places, and by other teachers, in the same manner. If it be allowable, in imitation of a learned theological writer, to examine a work no further than the title for authority and proof, I might likewise derive an equal support of my position, if such support were not supplied from better sources, from the apocryphal books of the second century, called, “the Preaching of Peter,” and “the Preaching of Paul.”

“I argued, that the *title* of those works, the Gospel of the Twelve, and the Memoirs of the Apostles, were derived from the *title* of the document which gave them birth. But though I argued from the *titles* of those works to the *title* of the document, yet I never argued from the *contents* either of the Gospel of the Twelve, or of the Memoirs of the Apostles, to the *contents* of the document.” Marsh’s Letters, p. 26, 27.

St. Paul, before he had any personal intercourse with the Apostles at Jerusalem, preached, by revelation from our Saviour himself, the same gospel as they preached. They were satisfied that he had not preached a different gospel from their own, although he had not participated with them in the advantage of either oral or written communications. From an attentive examination of this reasoning, I conceive that it is not necessary to suppose the existence of any previous documents whatever, that may be considered as the basis of the first three Gospels, because these Gospels do not contain any thing which might not have been there inserted by means of personal knowledge, aided, but not superseded, by the common gift of inspiration.

If however we are to suppose, that some original document did exist, and that it was incorporated with the Gospels, it must have been composed without any particular view to publication, and not designed for any specific object, (as it is said to have been imperfect,) until others should be published on the same subject, which required the aid or explanation of such a supplementary addition. Its existence however, its original use, its subsequent incorporation, and its final disappear-

ance, are equally unsupported by history or probability.

When it was absorbed in the Gospels, the original was soon lost, because it was no longer necessary; and “few copies are supposed to have ever existed.” That the Apostles ever committed to writing any facts relative to the history of our Saviour, which they did not design for the instruction of others, is not probable. The regard of the new converts for what the Apostles had preached would interest the former in the preservation of every thing that the Apostles had written.

The mode of multiplying copies by transcribers might, for any thing we know, have been a matter of very considerable charge and cost to the poorer converts, and of course not likely to be undertaken unnecessarily; but, notwithstanding this obstacle, the multiplication of them is proved by the subsequent progress of Christianity. We cannot pretend to enter upon a minute enquiry respecting the sources of the means, which the early Christians possessed, of defraying the charge of copies of the Scriptures. It is certain that, wherever Christianity was established, copies of the Scrip-

^f Illustration of the Hypothesis, p. 57.

tures, in sufficient numbers to prevent its subversion and decline, and to ensure its purity, must have been procured in some way or another. We may not be able to compute the expence, but we cannot suppose that Christianity long existed in any place where its records were scantily dispersed. If then this expence of transcription were no obstacle to the multiplication of copies at the first diffusion of the Gospel, we may conclude, that it would be no obstacle afterwards ; for the difference between these two points of time was too small to admit of such an augmentation of expence as to prevent the dispersion of new copies. Indeed, if it operated at all, it would rather have a contrary effect. An increased facility in executing this species of labour would tend to diminish the expence. This argument is still further weakened, if we consider the shortness of the writings which the Apostles are supposed to have communicated ; so that whether we refer to the compendious brevity of these supposed apostolical works, or the shortness of the period between *their* publication, and that of the more complete evangelical histories, we must be persuaded, that the expence of copying cannot be assigned as a reason why a small number of them

only should be published and dispersed. If the document above alluded to had been of apostolical authority, the zeal of the converts would most probably in either case have increased the number of copies, and caused an anxious attention to the preservation of them; whilst the necessary retirement and privacy of the first Christians afforded them sufficient leisure for this employment.

It is not necessary to have recourse to the farther supposition, that the copies were lost at the time "Jerusalem was destroyed, and "Judæa itself subverted," if it were true that they were "already considered by Christians "as useless, and regarded with abhorrence by "the Jews." But the Jews would not have had more respect for the Gospels themselves,

§ I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of transcribing from the opposite page of my MS. the following remarks of a very able and eloquent writer, my friend, the Rev. R. Warner, of Bath: "The destruction of Jerusalem does "not appear to be an event likely to have produced the "loss of any thing highly esteemed by the Christians; "it was not effected in a moment, but was the work of "years. Besides, the Christians, I apprehend, forewarned "of what was to happen, were sufficiently on their "guard to have secured themselves, as well as every "thing of importance to them."

than they had for the document, on which the Gospels were founded. The Christians might indeed have lost their Gospels "in the convulsions of that period," if they had not been influenced by a particular regard to preserve them; but the small number of copies in existence, according to the hypothesis, would have operated in awakening their solicitude, and invigorating their exertions, for their preservation. The copies of the Gospels, and the memorials of the preaching of the Apostles, were too widely diffused to be annihilated at the destruction of Jerusalem. All the evangelists, except St. John, were dead, and their Gospels were published; nor can it be supposed that, even at Jerusalem, those Christians, who had such warning to fly to the mountains, would not remove the evidences of their religion to the place of safety, to which they themselves were instructed to fly. The document then, if any such ever existed, must have been an object of care at this time. A period of convulsion and national distress would have made the Christians attentive to the preservation of every authentic record of their religion; particularly when the danger, which extended to the minutest object of concern, and threatened the document itself,

might have destroyed the fuller account that contained the document, which, if preserved, might have its use again.

The loss of it however, it seems, is to be attributed to another ^h cause; for we are informed, that the church was concerned only with “canonical Gospels, but the document “was never taken into the canon.” But still, if it had ever existed, it would have participated in that regard and veneration which were due to the original authority and reception of the canonical Gospels. For there is great probability that the Gospels themselves were received by the first Christians, not merely because such books were written by certain persons, but likewise because these books coincided with that preaching, by which they themselves had been instructed and converted. From this coincidence it is probable, that the written records of the Christian religion derived their claims to an acknowledgment of their authenticity, not from any decree of the Apostles assembled at Jerusalem. The Apostles had preached a certain doctrine, and propagated certain facts; and they were to take care that they did not write what was

^h Illustration of the Hypothesis, p. 57.

contradictory to either : and of this agreement their converts were to be the judges. The written Gospels themselves were, subsequently, the guide to other teachers, and the test in the hands of other converts ; but they had originally been examined by a rule, which would fully establish the consistency of the authors, and would determine by this, among other proofs, the reality of the divine assistance in their compositions. Is it, in short, necessary to reduce the measure of inspiration, or to annihilate it altogether, in order the better to account for certain verbal agreements, or minute discrepancies, in the narratives of the authors of the New Testament ? The inspiration was a promise which rested on the same authority with the other promises of the Scriptures ; and one of its offices was, to do what the document, by the hypothesis, was not calculated to do, “ to call *all* things to “ their remembrance.”

It is to be lamented that the subject of the origin of the three first Gospels has been pur-

ⁱ I allude to an able and ingenious pamphlet by the Rev. D. Veyfie, B. D. late fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. The examination of Mr. Marsh's Hypothesis was necessary, and the exposure of its inadequacy is successful ; but I confess I should have been more satisfied if

sued by another writer on a similar principle of the existence of imaginary documents. It is, I conceive, a mistake to assume that the existence of a given writing is a question to be decided by a superiority of one hypothesis to another. The question itself is a question of facts, of which we have no information, connected with the operation of a supernatural power, the nature of which we do not understand. Every hypothesis on this subject must, probably from our ignorance, exclude inspiration in a greater or less degree; and it must therefore be defective, because that assistance cannot be measured under all the circumstances of the composition of the Gospels. But were we to declare that we neither can, nor wish to account for the verbal agreement in the narratives of the Evangelists, how would the cause of Christianity be disgraced by the avowal of such an incurious disposition, or by such an exposure of irremediable ignorance? How far would such a confession extend? Merely to the acknowledgment, that we did

the above essay had concluded with proving, that hypothesis was inadmissible in determining a question of fact. Mr. Marsh's Hypothesis might be correctly denominated, A Theory of a portion of the private lives of the Evangelists and Apostles.

not know under what circumstances the Gospels were written, and did not attempt to supply by conjecture the defects, if any, of the private history of the Apostles, nor to adapt a theory of inspiration to the nature and quantity of information which, we are to presuppose, previously existed in writing.

With regard to the preservation of the records of the Christian religion, it has been said, that both the wisdom and goodness of God required the interposition of his providence to preserve ^k pure and uncorrupt “ the genuine authentic records of that Gospel, “ which he had thought fit, at the expence of “ so many miracles and prophecies, to publish “ to the world.” To say nothing of the presumption of adjudging the duties of divine wisdom and goodness, which with such cold effrontery here obtrudes itself, let it be recollected, that, as soon as the Gospels were committed to writing, and made public, the authenticity of these books was subject to the same laws of evidence as any other written document whatsoever. The Almighty did not substitute other grounds of credibility for the reception of the evangelical writings, in the

^k Diffonance, Pref. p. xi.

place of those which are regarded as necessary for the establishment of the truth of any history that contains facts of an ordinary nature. 'And the diffusion of Christianity among nations which had attained to different degrees of improvement, and subsisted under different political forms, has not been attended with any peculiar fluctuation in the purity of its records that can be supposed to be connected with the interests opposed to it, or the learned disputes which arose after its establishment. Yet it seems to be implied in the supposition of "The Diffonance," that whenever the doctrines of Christianity, or its precepts; or its facts, opposed the theories of some, as well as the interests of others, that an attempt was then made to pervert the writings in which the precepts, facts, and doctrines were contained; or that some events were continually occurring, the effects of which upon the sacred books it required the hand of the Almighty to avert or to frustrate. One writer indeed has conjectured, ¹ "that the canonical writings of the New Testament were concealed in the coffers of private churches, or persons, till the time of

¹ Dodwell, *Diff. in Iren.* p. 66. Toland's translation;

“Trajan, or even perhaps of Hadrian, that “they might not come to the knowledge of “the catholic church.” Had this been an established fact, we must have received it on the credit of the author, and have accounted for it as we were able. But it is evident that it is only a conjecture. It would otherwise have protracted the period of tradition to an extent, which would have required the constant interposition of a miraculous power to preserve it in its original integrity. It would also have supported the invidious hypothesis of those, who think that the Christians could not but have used every opportunity in their power of adapting to their own purposes all the existing copies of the New Testament. These Christians are said indeed to have withheld their copies from general inspection, under the apprehension of danger; but it does not appear that they had recourse to this project even in the persecution of Diocletian: and indeed it would be more difficult to vindicate the purity of the books of the New Testament, if it had happened that there was a time when the Christians had at once in their hands every copy of the books of the evangelical collection.

It is further stated, upon the same ground

of conjecture, that if ^m “ by chance the books
 “ of the New Testament had been publicly
 “ circulated, they would have been over-
 “ whelmed by the multitude of apocryphal
 “ and ⁿ supposititious books, so that the Scrip-
 “ tures could not have been distinguished from
 “ these without a new examination, and a
 “ new testimony.” This argument rests upon
 the assumption, that the apocryphal and sup-
 posititious books were intended by their au-
 thors, or by those who used them, to super-
 sede, or to be substituted in the place of, the
 acknowledged writings of the New Testa-
 ment. Ecclesiastical history does not confirm
 any part of this suspicion. But if such had
 been the design of the writers, it would still
 have been necessary to examine what might
 be the authority of the books which were then
 received, and of those which were produced,
 although at a subsequent period, in competi-

^m Dodwell in Iren.

ⁿ Professor Less seems to have had similar doubts.
 “ Moreover, subsequent information is inadequate to esta-
 “ blish the authenticity of the scriptures of the New Tes-
 “ tament. It is too recent, and the foregoing centuries
 “ were too replete with spurious and forged works, to be
 “ capable of instructing us confidently what writings were
 “ actually composed by the disciples of Jesus in the first
 “ century.” Kingdon’s translation, p. 10, 11.

tion for the same authority among Christians. The circumstance of mere priority of publication of the Gospels could not have made such an enquiry superfluous at any time, but particularly at so late a period as the reign of Hadrian^o.

It is however of importance to insist upon the observation, that those, who used apocryphal books, did not on this account reject the genuine apostolical writings. The P Marcoufians, who received the gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, perverted the meaning, and misapplied different passages of the three first Gospels, in confirmation of their own opinions; but they did not falsify the words, nor insert spurious additions. We may conclude, that those books of Scripture, which a particular sect interpreted in their own favour, with a view to deduce some support to a particular system, were received as authentic: but it is singular, that they seemed to prefer the sanction of Scripture, when they might have appealed exclusively to their own apocryphal treatises.

Some, however, of the older heretics, as

^o Hadrian began to reign A.D. 117. or 119.

^p Irenæus, p. 91—93.

“ the Ebionites and Marcionites, and some other pretended Christians, rejected some books of the New Testament ; but their authority,” it is said, “ can be of no weight, as they could not fairly pass for Christians.” This summary condemnation of these witnesses will not excuse us from the farther labour of enquiring into the reasons on which they are objected to. Whether they were Christians or not is a question which has no reference to the subject. It does not affect the antiquity of the period when these persons lived, nor their proximity to the apostolical times. Their testimony, if favourable, would perhaps have been regarded as important from this very circumstance of proximity ; and when in opposition, if it be not formidable, it is at least worthy of examination. The Ebionites however certainly received one Gospel, that of St. Matthew ; the Marcionites, that of St. Luke ; and the Gnostics, that of St. John. The question then is, whether those persons are to be denominated Christians, who received one Gospel only. But all the primitive Christians were at first, through necessity in-

^q Richardson on the Canon of the New Testament ; and Cockburn’s Historical Dissertation on the books of the New Testament, p. 1.

deed, in the same situation; for they could not probably know that others existed, unless the three first Gospels were composed and published, and interchanged among the various Christian communities at the same time. Indeed there might have been a natural partiality for the Gospel, written by the person by whom the Christians of a certain tract of country were converted. Besides, as all the Apostles preached the same Gospel, containing nearly the same facts, and promulgating the same doctrine, the reception of one Gospel, without mutilation, could not justly expose the persons to the loss of the name and distinction of Christians; and it is indeed rather to be considered as one of the technical reproaches of controversy. † It appears that the Carpocratians, Cerinthians, the followers of Prodicus and Cerdon, received the same books of Scripture that other Christians received. Heracleon the Valentinian composed comments on several parts of the New Testament, and probably, as it is supposed, on all the books. Origen indeed, in his reply to Celsus, has said, that none but the Valentinians, the Marcion-

† See Lardner under the respective heads, Carpocratians, &c.

ites, and the disciples of Lucius, corrupted the Scriptures. But had any of the alterations of these heretics contaminated the generality of the copies of the Scriptures, it must have been discovered by the traces of their peculiar opinions in such variations.

The author of "The Diffonance" supposes that the Scriptures were corrupted in the second and third centuries, because at this time certain persons wrote apocryphal books; and the transition was easy from one fraud to the other. But admitting the principle, that the altered passages would probably be accommodated to the peculiar tenets of the sectarists, it is a singular fact, that "none of the numerous manuscripts brought from Greece favours any heretical dogma;" and that "no criterion exists for distinguishing the ortho-

^s Wetstein, Prolegom. pp. 29. 33. "In tot codicibus ex Græcia allatis ne una quidem hætenus reperta est, quæ hæretico dogmati faveat; ne jam dicam de codicibus Græcis Latinorum imprimis de nostro Cantabrigienfi ejusque Luc. vi. 5. viros doctos aliter judicare. Cum igitur omnes varietates partim negligentia, partim studio emendandi adeoque scriptorum sacrorum honori consulenti, originem debeant, nec *κρίτηριον* relinquitur, quo librarius orthodoxus ab hæretico distinguatur, nec rationi demonstrari potest, in solos hæreticos cadere aut negligentiam, aut studium emendandi."

“dox from the heretical transcriber.” It may be inferred, I conceive, from these facts; that some of the heretics corrupted their own private copies only; and the gospel of this or that heresiarch will denote only a copy of a part of the Scriptures, altered in various modes to favour the principles of their system, and not a new fabrication of their own. This may explain the admission of only one Gospel among several of the sects, but this admission does not imply a renunciation of the rest on the ground of want of authority.

It is the opinion of an eminent writer on the Canon of the New Testament, that the heretics, those especially who composed an apocryphal gospel, could not receive, or even regard those, which were authentic and canonical. Basilides is said to have “composed twenty-four books on the Gospel: this is thought to imply his own gospel, and not any of ours;” and it is considered as “much the more probable opinion,” “because it cannot be imagined that heresiarch would shew so great respect to ours.” It is not certain that Basilides did fabricate an apocryphal gospel, but it is more probable that he

† Jones, Canon of the New Test. vol. i. p. 177.

commented upon the genuine books. However, whether he himself composed a gospel or not, he received that of St. Matthew ;^u “ and there is no proof that he rejected the “ other three.”^x Leucius, or Lucanus, it is admitted, furnished a large proportion of the apocryphal works, which, nevertheless, it is to be remarked, do not contradict the general facts of the canonical Scriptures. His followers, according to the^y hypothetical declaration of Origen, are thought to have altered the received books of the New Testament ; and it is to be presumed that, if they received them even with their own alterations, they did not deviate from the injunctions and practice of their master : at least it is evident, that they did not prefer his compositions altogether to the evangelical histories. If this be correctly represented, and I am not sensible that it is inaccurate, we shall not aggravate the danger to which the faith of the early Christians was exposed, although “ the spurious writings of heretics were not rejected,

^u Lardner, vol. ix. p. 305.

^x Lardner under Leucius, and Jones on the Canon of the New Testament.

^y Οἱμαι δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ Λευκάνου. Lib. ii. p. 77. Edit. Cant.

“nor the faithful admonished to beware of
“them for the future.”

It is indeed suggested, that the catholic church should have taken these precautions of determining the authenticity or spuriousness of the books of the New Testament. To determine however what we are to understand by the catholic church at this period, is not easy, so as to be able to form any notion of its concurrence in a general act. Besides, it is here supposed that these spurious writings had been dispersed to nearly the same extent as the authentic Scriptures, if the effects of their contents required the interposition of the catholic church. But how could the opinions of all the churches have been collected for the determination of this question? The church acquired more real strength without such an interposition, than it could have obtained by it. The spurious works appeared not indeed without the opposition and censure of individuals, but they were not suppressed or stigmatized by the authority of the church. The sentence of individuals will not be regarded unless founded upon enquiry and examination: a body of persons may decree praise or censure, assuring others that they have individually enquired and examined, and without

specifying the reasons of their conclusion. But it is obvious that such determinations can have no weight or title to regard.

* It has been observed, that the “ writings
“ of the ² Apostles were so conjoined with the
“ apocryphal, that it was not manifest, by any
“ mark or public censure of the church, which
“ of the two should be preferred to the other.”

It has appeared from previous observations, that this mark or censure was unnecessary, because it was not the design even of the authors of the apocryphal books to substitute them in the place of the writings of the Apostles. It is satisfactory to know, that we do not derive our present canon of Scripture from the interposition of the church, dictating what books were genuine, and what books were spurious. The consent of the churches, both as to what they received, and what they rejected, was the result of independent enquiry, and not the effect of a confederacy of spiritual rulers, or the stratagems of a party. The liberty of judgment, whether flowing from the state of the Christians at the time, or from any religious forbearance, is indicated by the numerous writings and sects of heretics ; and,

² Toland from Dodwell, p. 71, 72.

if we may judge from the asperities of their controversial language, their adversaries would scarcely have been satisfied with opposing the uncertain and circuitous restraint of argument only, if, as a body, they had possessed either power of their own, or could have engaged that of the civil magistrate on their behalf. Those times must be regarded as favourable to Christianity, which, when its farther progress was to be effected by means of written documents, obliged its professors to appeal to the understanding alone for the conviction of their adversaries.

The determination however of the question relative to the canonical books has been resolved into authority of some kind. It is the opinion of an ^a eminent writer, that the Apostles approved and authorized certain books of the canon, and that "testimonials were transmitted to the churches to prove them apostolical."

It is ^b certainly a singular circumstance, that the form at least of such a warrant for the re-

^a Richardson, Canon of the New Test. Vindicated, p. 7—9.

^b I had not read at this time the observations of Michaelis, vol. i. p. 88. "Another proof which has been given is much stronger than the former; viz. that the

cèption of the canonical books has not been any where preserved. Its importance was such, that it ought always to have accompanied the instrument itself, which it sanctioned, particularly as so momentous a consequence was involved in the existence of such a formulary; namely, that what was approved “by the Apostles was, without controversy, “dictated by the Holy Ghost.” If we apply this rule to the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, it is not necessary to deduce their inspiration from any apostolical recommendation. They had both preached the Gospel; and, if one committed to writing what St. Peter delivered, and the other the preaching of St. Paul, it is probable that each of these written Gospels was first communicated to the converts of these Apostles, and it was unnecessary to add the approbation as a corroborating authority, when the oral teaching must ultimately try the approbation itself, as well as the genuineness of the written Gospel. Besides,

“Apostles themselves have recommended these books as “canonical. If that be true, all doubt of their canonical “authority is removed. But which of the Apostles has “given this recommendation or testimony, and where is “it recorded? In their epistles, at least in respect to St. Luke, no trace is to be found.”

such a sanction might have been so easily imitated, that it might have occasioned much perplexity, at a very early period, in distinguishing the spurious from the genuine apostolical writings. But the question of inspiration could not have been solely dependent on the authenticity of a detached autograph. The forgeries contained in the *decretals* shew how inadequate such assurances would have been to secure credibility, when these assurances had been withheld for a considerable length of time after the supposed events had taken place. There can be no doubt, that, had there been any historical proof of such approbation, we must have admitted it; but an appeal to authority could scarcely have been made secretly, when it would at first have been necessary for the Christians to refer to it frequently and publicly for the satisfaction of new believers.

It is indeed said, that ^d “ we have no reason to ascribe inspiration to the works of a prophet, except when he declares, as such, that what he writes is inspired, and that he in those instances assumes that character.

^c See Hume's Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 229.

^d Michaelis, vol. i. p. 88.

“ But this neither St. Mark nor St. Luke have
 “ declared in any part of their writings.”
 But what security for the validity of these
 claims to inspiration should we find in men’s
 own assertions. ^e “ How do we know that
 “ the books of Esdras, Tobit, Judith, were
 “ not divinely inspired, and that the books of
 “ Moses, Joshua, Judges, and others, were
 “ written by divine Inspiration, but from tra-
 “ dition? We cannot learn it from the books
 “ themselves, for the apocryphal Esdras, for
 “ instance, tells us, that he was divinely in-
 “ spired, which is more than the authors of
 “ the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, or Kings
 “ tell us in any of those books.” This crite-
 rion then is evidently ambiguous; and the
 question may admit some digressive examina-
 tion, in what manner we are to prove the
 inspiration of these writers. It is admitted
 that we could not deduce it from their own
 affirmation. We could not infer it from their
 being contemporaries or companions of the
 Apostles, for we do not reason in this man-
 ner; ^f “ a disciple accompanied an apostle on

^e “ Tradition necessary to explain and interpret the
 “ Holy Scriptures.” By T. Brett, LL. D. 1718. p. 31.

^f Michaelis, vol. i. p. 88.

“ his journies, therefore his writings are inspired.” We are told, “ that a disciple might possess the gift of miracles, be able to restore the sick, to speak languages which he had never learnt, and even be endowed with the spirit of prophecy, though his writings were not inspired.” It may be conceded, that there is no necessary connection in these circumstances. To advert again to the argument from apostolical approbation ; nothing approaches so near to a proof of such approbation having been given to St. Luke, than his composition of the early history of Christianity, contained in the Acts of the Apostles. But still the approbation itself is not extant, however our reasonings from probability only would justify us in assuming such an authority for the undertaking, and such a sanction to it after its completion. I do not indeed conceive how the inspiration of one person could be so ascertained as to be a matter of testimony, which was to be received upon the evidence of another inspired person. Inspiration itself does not appear to have been susceptible of that nice and clear examination, which should be the ground of testimony ; not to omit, that this might occasion no unreasonable suspicion of collusion between the parties.

In what manner then can we be satisfied that they were inspired? It is true indeed, that all who preached did not also write a Gospel; but it is probable that they, who wrote a Gospel, had previously preached it in some "quarters" of the Jews or Gentiles. The preaching of the Gospel was necessarily attended with the ability to perform miracles, which, while they testified the divinity of the revelation, constituted the evidence for the authority of the preacher, and the great public and cogent proof of his inspiration. Can any proof, except that by miracles, of inspiration, or, what is the same thing, of knowledge being revealed, be addressed to the senses or the understanding? The nature of the thing does not admit of any other proof. In what manner the faculties of the inspired person are affected, how his memory is assisted, that the subject and language of his communication are suggested, and do not originate in himself, may be affirmed, and perhaps imperfectly described; but what direct proof can we have that this is his real intellectual state? It is evident that we cannot have any. We may apply this criterion to the enquiry, whether the genuine epistle of Clemens Romanus,

and those of the other “apostolic fathers, must “be received as genuine.” We must premise, that the early Christians did not consider them as part of the canon ; and we must admire their caution in not rashly blending with the known productions of inspiration, those, which veneration for the situation and characters of their authors might have impelled them to introduce. In the epistle of Clemens, for example, it may be remarked, that the quotations from the books of Scripture furnish all that is imperative in his exhortation. There is nothing authoritative but what is derived from the words of the Holy Spirit, speaking in the writings of others ; whereas a writer, who was himself inspired, would not appeal so frequently for the support of his injunctions, and still less for the injunctions themselves, to extraneous authority. I do not presume to assert, that this was one of the reasons which prevented the Christians from assigning to this epistle the same rank as to those of St. Paul ; but it is a circumstance which, even in our judgment, would indicate some deficiency in the proof of inspiration.

We are willing however to be accused of

credulity in admitting the inspiration of St. Mark and St. Luke. Any apparent inconsistency of theirs with the writings of St. Matthew and St. John, in several particulars, does not derogate from inspiration. It merely shews our ignorance of the mode how these writings are to be reconciled. This is no subterfuge. Any supposed inconsistency in the narratives of the events of our Saviour's ministry, where the same acts were so often repeated, within the compass of a small tract of country, and at such a variety of places and seasons, may be resolved into a gratuitous assumption of identity in those incidents which were really different, or which occurred at a different place, or at a different season, or at a different part of the same road, or city, or village. This however is an inconsistency of the lowest class. We have no repugnancies in the precepts, no failure of prophecy, no unreal miracles. We shall not therefore abandon the inspiration of St. Mark and St. Luke upon the ground of dissonance from the other Evangelists. The infidel might object to an excess of harmonious uniformity, as an indication of collusive confederacy. But in accounting for differences on one hand,

and a verbal agreement on the other, between the Evangelists, it is singular that inspiration is equally excluded by the critic. We know indeed that contradictions are inconsistent with inspiration; but are we certain that a verbal agreement is incompatible with this gift of the Spirit? We know what a contradiction is; but an historical discrepancy is not to be confounded with variations which affect the principles of morality or the veracity of the writer. There is therefore much latitude for the reconciliation of the alledged differences, without using the violent expedient of denying the inspiration in order to take away the necessity of attempting to harmonize facts, which were never perhaps intended to be identified with others, or might be supposed to be the same facts without imputing to the authors contradiction or inconsistency; or to those, who receive them as true, credulity and superstition. But let credulity and superstition be imputed to us. We can scarcely boast of much strength of understanding, or of great Christian fortitude, even if we should hold fast, against such temptation, this part of our faith without wavering; even if we should not be influenced to

reject a great portion of the records of Christianity by trite reproaches, dishonest argument, unfounded positions, and perverted Scripture.

SERMON V.

2 PET. i. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

IN order to complete a part of the enquiry relative to the authenticity of the present canon of the New Testament, we are in the next place to examine, whether “the second and succeeding centuries” were as favourable as is represented to the corruption of the sacred writings; and whether the fabrication of books, which appeared at those periods under the names of apostles, or apostolical persons, tended to confound the distinction between authentic and spurious records. The author of “The Diffonance” considers it to be sufficient if he refers his imaginary interpolations and corruptions to the copyists of those ages, and is satisfied that by such an intimation he produces full authority for his critical suspicions, and for the impeachment of the credibility of all which he presumes to stig-

matize. It is alledged, that, before the discovery of ^a “ printing, it was very easy for art-
“ ful or superstitious copyists, not only to in-
“ terpolate authentic writings with such al-
“ terations and additions as accorded with
“ their own credulity or cunning, but even to
“ produce entire works of their own or others’
“ forgery, under the name of any writer they
“ pleased.” The facility, upon which the au-
thor insists, of corrupting manuscripts before
the invention of printing, is assumed to be
much greater than I conceive it really was,
But this point will require farther elucidation.
It may be remarked, and, had the observation
been repeated as often as it was necessary,
it would have recurred with tiresome fre-
quency, that there is no historical proof of the
other particulars. We are expected to admit,
without testimony, that the copyists of the
sacred writings were the persons who were
authors of certain forgeries, of the existence
of which no trace is to be discovered; and
that persons engaged in this employment of
transcribing the sacred volumes were more
likely to be the authors of such forgeries than
any other persons. But we are entirely igno-

^a Diffonance, p. 26, 27.

rant of the opinions of these copyists, of the numbers that were employed, and of the mode of executing their transcripts; and therefore we cannot judge to what extent they were able to disseminate the errors which they adopted or invented, and incorporated with the genuine apostolical records. All that we know is, that such persons had an opportunity of adapting their copies, by fraudulent alterations, to a certain system of opinions; but there is no proof of such deviations from their originals. . It is easy indeed to ascribe to these copyists any moral qualities which may support an hypothesis; but it is not according to nature, I conceive, to represent interpolated additions as originating in the credulity of the superstitious, whose character it rather is to observe such a rigid accuracy as would not admit any departure from the sacred archetype. The superstitious copyist must be excepted from the number of agents occupied in falsifying the genuine Scriptures, or in fabricating original fictions. But these credulous and superstitious agents are mere creatures of a sceptical imagination. They are to be regarded only as necessary constituents of a gratuitous hypothesis, and whose existence is no more to be admitted than the vibrations of

the Hartleian theory, ascribed to ^b“ a substance, which no man could ever prove to have vibrations, or to be capable of them.”

It is more plausible, perhaps, than just, to represent the invention of printing as a better security against this species of imposture, than the multiplication of copies of compositions by means of transcripts. It does not however appear from the history of the times, that the books of the sacred writings could have been more generally dispersed by means of the art of the typographer, than they were by the less expeditious labour of the pen of the copyist. The establishment of Christianity might be supposed to be sufficiently secure on the foundation of the authority of its first teachers, and upon tradition. But its further progress could not be ensured without the opportunity of recurring to the records of the religion, in order to verify the instruction which they received, or to satisfy the doubts that would naturally arise in minds more inquisitive and more accustomed to intellectual exertion. We are further to consider, that the collation of copies would not have been more facilitated by the art of printing. This species of labour,

^b Reid's Essays, p. 94. edit. 4to.

although it was the more immediate concern of persons who might be expected to be the guardians of the integrity and purity of the sacred books, might have been so easy, that the mere impulse of curiosity would have been a sufficient inducement to undertake it, even without any suspicion of differences and contradictions. We must also remember, that when no other mode of multiplying copies of writings was known but by means of manuscripts, the discrimination of each nice particular was easy and familiar to the contemporary reader. The argument however of the objector is reduced, towards the conclusion of the statement, to a form of assertion, mitigated and tempered, perhaps, on account of his own suspicions of its invalidity. "This practice," he says, "of interpolation and forgery was actually so common amongst several, who called themselves Christians, in the second and succeeding centuries, that, if what we call the scriptures of the New Testament were not so tampered with, they are almost the only writings upon the same subject of those early times which have escaped free." With an adversary, who avails himself of

^c Diffonance, p. 27.

every minute circumstance which can be made to favour his hypothesis, it cannot be thought hypercritical or uncandid to observe, that “if the practice was common amongst several only, who called themselves Christians,” their whole lives must have been occupied in this employment; and yet the names of these falsaries have not been preserved, nor any particulars respecting their frauds. Their business must be supposed to have consisted in corrupting the Scriptures, and in forging writings in consonance to those corruptions. In examining this question of the corruption of the Scriptures, it is not however intended to be affirmed, that opportunities were not easily afforded of attempting any alterations in the sacred books; but we are to separate the actions of individuals from those changes, which are thought to have been effected by Christians in their collective capacity. Some of the alterations of St. Luke’s Gospel by Marcion are resolvable into the variations of copies; yet he did accommodate the Scripture to his own sentiments, but not without detection and censure. The imaginary falsaries of “The Diffonance,” however, although they acted under the direction, and with the autho-

rity, of a supposed corrupt church, have not yet been discovered.

In considering the question of the diffusion of transcripts from various originals, we attribute perhaps more advantages to the invention of printing than ought to be ascribed to it. The mere mention of this splendid acquisition operates upon the mind in a confused manner, and seems to imply a visible and direct superiority over the mode of communication by means of the hand-writing of individuals. It may perhaps appear, upon enquiry, that this presumed superiority is questionable when referred to this particular instance, the dispersion of copies of the scriptures of the New Testament.

With regard to the facility of multiplying copies of these books, one consequence should have ensued, which did not take place. Had they been provided slowly, or at very considerable charge, the promulgation of Christianity must have been impeded by both these causes. But even if the whole of the present collection had been copied by the same individual, his zeal and industry need not be supposed to exceed the zeal and industry of later ages, as exerted in the similar occupation of copying the liturgical offices of the church.

The legal incapacities of the early Christians for civil offices, and their indifference to worldly advantages and pursuits, produced naturally a speculative and retired mode of life. This afforded much opportunity for sedentary employment, and the multiplication of copies of the sacred Scriptures was probably the only active business in which they interested themselves.

We may remark, that in a printed book, whatever subsequent insertion may be suspected, its detection would be more difficult than in any manuscript. Every printed book retains and repeats errors of every kind, and presents an uniformity of mistake in every copy : whereas in a manuscript one transcript checks the errors of another, because we oppose the negligence of one individual to the greater care of another ; or at least we have the contingency, that the same error has not been committed by different persons. In every different manuscript we can generally apply, or we can distinguish when we do apply, to the diligence of a different person ; whereas, in a printed book, the errors of the same individual perplex every reader of the work, without any resource.

The very character of the letters of a ma-

manuscript is a criterion of its date, and a measure of its value ; and subsequent insertions present the marks of a different period. These niceties, but all of them of great moment, are lost, when the contents of a manuscript are transferred to a printed book.

The substitution of printed books for manuscripts was not desirable at the period when it is supposed that the art of printing would have been a better security against imposition than the art of the transcriber. There are many nice particulars which would betray anachronismal errors. Indeed there is scarcely any thing, both from the materials employed, and the formation of the letters, which does not afford an appropriate indication of dates. These are incommunicable almost by description, and could not have been transferred by *imitation* ~~imitation~~ into the copies destined for general use. We should not omit likewise to notice, that where all learning was in the form of manuscripts only, the discrimination of age, and the particulars necessary to give authority to any writing, must have been familiar, and have occasioned little or no trouble, and certainly none to have produced much uncertainty.

The invention of the art of printing would

in reality have been detrimental, had it been introduced when, according to the supposition of some persons, it would have been attended with greater utility. Although the materials of manuscripts are sufficiently fragile, and liable to decay and injury, yet, when they have been copied, less care for the preservation of the originals has been considered as necessary upon the supposition, that an instrument of equivalent authority has been substituted. We cannot precisely ascertain the length of time before this would take place; but we may be assured, that this diminution of attention would, sooner or later, be the effect of the introduction of a new species of custody, which would be regarded as superseding any troublesome diligence that might have been previously required to protect them from the ordinary casualties of situation or nature. Would it have been desirable, we may ask, to have had such an art as that of printing, at such a period, which would have had such an effect as this? The evidence for the Gospel history, when in the form of a writing, would have been greatly reduced in quantity, and would have been made doubtful and even suspicious in kind.

The author of "The Diffonance" has objected, in a plausible manner, to the authority of that multiplicity of copies, which we suppose to have been derived from the same original. He has again recourse to his usual expedient, a fallacious analogy, to illustrate his argument. He compares the case to that of a will, where one copy only can possess full authority. But the comparison of a copy of a writing and of a will is defective. The circumstances of a will originate in the person whose will it is said to be; and if it cannot be proved to be his, it is of no consequence whose it may be, or what are the circumstances, as they are all dependent upon the determination, who was the individual. A copy of a writing may have every mark of genuineness as a history, and every criterion of probability; and we may be satisfied of its truth, although we should not be acquainted with the name of its author. Internal evidence and analogy are admissible in reasoning on the genuineness of a narrative; whereas they are excluded absolutely by the nature of a testamentary instrument. A history admits testimony relative to the circumstances and facts; but a will does not admit any but what is relative to the person who made it.

It seems as if the author of "The Diffonance" had at length discovered a case, where the copy of a writing, after one remove from the original, was of no value as evidence, without considering that the nature of the contents of each writing gives the specific difference to the evidence in question.

It is asserted in "The Diffonance," with respect to the writings ^d "which are attributed to any Christian writers within the first half of the second century, that of the whole collection there is no satisfactory proof that any one composition worth notice is really the work of the writer whose name it bears, except the first Epistle of Clemens the Roman; and even that this has been evidently corrupted." The argument which is deduced from this observation ought to be well examined. Because there are doubts respecting the authenticity of some ancient writings on certain subjects connected with Christianity, therefore we can have no better proof respecting the genuineness of other writings, of greater antiquity, and of different authority and importance. The question is artfully contrived to appear to depend upon

^d Diffonance, p. 27.

the consideration of time, when it really relates to another particular. The argument indeed, if it were expected to have any weight, should have shewed, that the difficulty of determining the authenticity of these writings was either contemporary with the writings themselves, or that there was no criterion by which their real authority could be ascertained; or, that although the evidence of the authenticity of such writings was obscure and defective, yet they had been received as parts of the ancient collection of Scripture, and therefore that the records of Christianity itself, from being nearly contemporary writings, were not capable of more substantial authentication than the Shepherd of Hermas, or the epistles of Clement. It is however fortunate that this delusion has terminated even in some distant age of the church. We may rather perhaps be satisfied, that, if there was any reason for doubt in compositions of great antiquity and of small size, sufficient testimony has remained to direct our judgment in assigning to them due authority, and a proper place in a class subordinate to the authentic writings of apostles and evangelists. But there is no testimony of the early enlargement of the canon by the insertion of works of du-

bious claims, and the subsequent contraction of it by the rejection of such writings, upon the discovery of their want of authority. We know indeed that it did not originally consist of so many books; but it was never subsequently diminished by the necessity of obviating the precipitate admission of ambiguous writings. The preservation of the brief letter to Philemon is a proof of the care of the Christian assemblies in the custody of their documents; and the exclusion of the Shepherd of Hermas and the genuine epistle of Clement from the canon shews also, that the canon was not formed without the exercise of judgment, and a cautious examination of its future constituent portions. It ought to be proved by an adversary who is never perplexed for the invention of objections, that the Christian communions did not possess, or, if they possessed, did not use, the evidence which we have at this day; that the practice of forgery and interpolation had prevailed, so as to render useless the ordinary rules of determining the authenticity and genuineness of any writing, and that what they received they received in this state of confusion and perplexity, and that the collection of the scriptures of the New Testament was hastily and ignorantly separated from a

mas of writings contemporary in their publication, each of which had apparently an equal claim to be a constituent part of the projected canon, and those certainly, that presented themselves to notice with the commendatory and authoritative distinction of an apostolical name. The author of "The Diffonance" indeed says, "that every competent impartial judge must agree with the truly learned and candid Mosheim, that of the whole collection there is no satisfactory proof that any piece worth notice is really the work of the writer whose name it bears, except the first epistle of Clements the Roman." But this discovery was not reserved for the sagacity and erudition of Mosheim, nor for the literary researches of his age. Eusebius was as well acquainted with the different evidence for the authority of both, and has spoken of the two epistles as Mosheim himself would speak. "One undoubted epistle of his is circulated. The same epistle I have known to be publicly recited in many churches, both formerly and in our own times." Of the other epistle he speaks in this manner: "We are to learn that there is a second epistle of Clement,

“ not so notable as the former, and we know
“ that the ancients did not use it.” Neither
did he ascribe undue authority to the Shepherd of Hermas, or the epistle of St. Barnabas.

It is further clear, that the ground on which one book was received, and another rejected, was not merely, that one was written by a heretic, and the other by a person of the catholic church. Eusebius, speaking in a well known passage of certain gospels and acts, says, that “ they were the inventions of heretics, and are not so much as to be ranked
“ among spurious books, but are to be rejected
“ as wicked and absurd.” The production of these passages is so far useful, that we perceive that the same criterion was applied to one writing as to another, and that examination preceded censure.

It might perhaps be supposed, that in the early periods of the critical art the Christians might receive books, which, after its introduction, and in its improved state, they, or at least others, would have rejected. This is however rather to anticipate, than to reply to an objection which has been actually advanced. The subject then of examination would be either supposititious books, or cor-

ruptions of the Scriptures. It has however appeared, that the heretics, who used certain spurious and apocryphal books in conjunction with the Scriptures, did not alledge any objection derogatory to the authenticity of the latter, although they appealed for the support of their peculiar sentiments to writings of no authority. Sacred criticism might be said to consist at that time of two branches only; the discrimination of genuine and authentic from spurious compositions, and the collection, or rather perhaps the observation, of variations of the copies of the Scriptures, supposed to have been altered by heretical individuals, from those copies which were in general use. This second division was not neglected; and the comparison of different copies among the early Christians, whether a matter of necessity or curiosity, of common or of official vigilance, or the effect of a reasonable jealousy of innovation, must from these causes have been frequently undertaken. The standard would first be, the evangelical and apostolical autographs, as long as they could be preserved entire; and afterwards, accurate transcripts from these, so that an examination of this kind might to a certain degree be denominated critical. But when Tertullian, in his controversial work against

Marcion, affirms, that his Gospel was genuine, and that of Marcion adulterated; and when Marcion is ^f represented as retorting the imputation, and Tertullian asking, “ Who shall “ decide between us ? ” we are anxious to know what he regarded as sufficient to terminate such a doubt ; and we find that it was the consideration of the priority of time, and the writings in the possession of the churches founded by the Apostles ; not the *decrees* of churches, but the books which the most ancient churches followed as their source of religious instruction, and the law of their actions ; in short, it was virtually the comparison of the copies of the Scriptures among the various Christian communities, distinct from any exertion of power on their part to recommend, or to constitute such a canon of Scripture, and no other authority whatever. It may perhaps be

^f “ Quis inter nos determinabit, nisi temporis ratio ei præscribens auctoritatem, quod antiquius reperiatur ; et ei præjudicans vitiationem, quod posterius revincetur ? ... Videamus quod lac a Paulo Corinthiï hauserint ; ad quam regulam Galatæ sint correcti ; quid legant Philipenses, Thessalonicenses, Ephesii ; quid etiam Romani de proximo sonent, quibus Evangelium et Petrus et Paulus sanguine quoque suo signatum reliquerunt. Habemus et Joannis alumnas ecclesias. Tertull. adv. Marc. lib. iv. p. 504, 505. edit. Lutet. 1634.

worthy of transient notice, that the passage of ^gTertullian to which I refer has been lately employed by one of the Socinian improvers of the version of the New Testament to shew the honesty of the Father in acknowledging, that the question could not be determined whether his Gospel or Marcion's were the true one. But the Father has not any title to the praise of honesty from this ^hmodern upon the ground of the confession, that such a question must remain undecided ; for he appeals to antiquity as the arbitrator, not in any remote part of the same treatise, but in the same sentence, and in words which furnish the answer to his own interrogation : “ Quis inter nos determinabit, nisi temporis ratio ei præscribens auctoritatem, quod antiquius reperietur ; et ei præjudicans vitiationem, quod posterius revincetur.”

^g Tertull. adv. Marcion. t. i. p. 504. Lutet. 1634.

^h I cannot have much respect for the dissent of a person who adapts his authorities to his argument by omisions. To do full justice to the author of the letter in the Monthly Repository of Theology, No. 44, I shall certainly state, that after *determinabit* he has put &c., but he has also placed a note of interrogation after *determinabit*, as if the sentence were finished.

The author says, that “ Epiphanius accuses Marcion of corrupting and mutilating his copy of Luke's Gos-

It is difficult, and indeed it is the prominent difficulty in the whole of this enquiry, to disco-

“pel; but Marcion himself maintains *his copy to be genuine.*” Monthly Rep. p. 425. Dr. Marsh, in his notes on Michaelis, says, “But that Marcion used St. Luke’s Gospel at all, is a position which has been taken for granted, without the least proof. Marcion himself never pretended that it was the Gospel of St. Luke, as Tertullian acknowledges, saying, ‘Marcion Evangelio suo nullum ascribit autorem.’ Adv. Marc. lib. iv. c. 2.” The whole passage should be given: “Denique nobis fidem ex Apostolis Joannes et Matthæus insinuant; ex Apostolicis, Lucas et Marcus instaurant, iisdem regulis exorfi, quantum ad unicum Deum attinet Creatorem, et Christum ejus, natum ex virgine, supplementum Legis et Prophetarum. Viderit enim si narratio- num dispositio variavit, dummodo de capite fidei conveniat, de quo cum Marcione non convenit. *Contra* Marcion, evangelio scilicet suo, nullum adscribit auctorem; quasi non licuerit illi titulum quoque adfingere, cui nefas non fuit ipsum corpus evertere. Et possem hic jam gradum figere, non agnoscendum contendens opus, quod non erigat frontem, quod nullam constantiam præferat, nullam fidem repromittat de plenitudine tituli, et professione debita auctoris. Sed per omnia congregari malumus, nec dissimulamus quod ex nostro intelligi potest. Nam ex iis commentatoribus quos habemus, *Lucam videtur Marcion elegisse* quem cæderet.” Tertullian wished that he could have established the fact, that it was the gospel of this or that writer, because he had then his mode of arguing prepared for his antagonist. “We,” saith he, as Dr. Barrow has translated the passage, “when we would dispatch against he-

ver any facts whatever ; and even those which are collected do not preclude the necessity of

“ retics for the faith of the Gospel, do commonly use
 “ these short ways, which do maintain both the order of
 “ times prescribing against the lateness of impostors, and
 “ the authority of the churches patronizing apostolical
 “ tradition*.” Tertullian uses another word for Mar-
 cion’s system ; he calls it the Gospel of Marcion, and
 says, that although such was the mode of proceeding
 with heretics, yet in this case “ sed alium jam hinc ini-
 “ mus gradum, ipsum (ut professi sumus) Evangelium
 “ Marcionis provocantes, sic quoque probaturi adultera-
 “ tum.” The author of the letter avers boldly, “ The
 “ fact then is clear. The disputed chapters were wanting
 “ in the copy of Marcion, a Christian writer of unim-
 “ peached integrity, in the beginning of the second cen-
 “ tury, who maintained, that his was the genuine un-
 “ adulterated Gospel of Luke ; who probably had much
 “ better opportunities of information than those who
 “ came after him, and who could have no inducement
 “ to have rejected this narrative, had it been related by
 “ the Evangelist.” Monthly Rep. p. 425. I should ra-
 ther think that the opinion in the following passage
 would be that inducement : “ Marcion, ut carnem Christi
 “ negaret, negavit etiam nativitatem, aut ut nativitatem
 “ negaret, negavit et carnem, scilicet ne invicem sibi testi-
 “ monium redderent et responderent, nativitas et caro,
 “ quia nec nativitas sine carne, nec caro sine nativi-
 “ tate.” It would seem that Marcion had objected to the
 facts contained in these chapters, as Tertullian intimates :
 “ His, opinor, consiliis tot *originalia instrumenta Christi*

* Dr. Barrow on the Pope’s Supremacy, p. 118.

hypothetical reasoning, either by relating immediately to the subject, or by supplying easy and indisputable inferences. Eusebius however has preserved an extract from an ancient anonymous writer on the subject of the alterations of copies of the Scriptures by some early heretics. It is a curious example of their practice, and shews that the evidence of ancient writers was not founded upon authority exclusive of examination. ⁱ“ They who abuse
 “ the sciences of the infidels for the support
 “ of their heretical sentiments, and with an
 “ impious subtlety adulterate the simple faith
 “ of the divine Scriptures ; of such men what
 “ need I say, that they are far from the faith ?

“ *delere* Marcion ausus est, ne caro ejus probaretur.” After further expostulation he says, “ desiderantes rationem qua non putaveris natum esse Christum.” Tertull. de Carne Christi, cap. 1—3. The heretics were required to shew their originals, or the authority for the deviations in their books from those received in general ; but Marcion certainly did not appeal even to any known apostolical writer. And the anonymous author against Artemo says, that “ they did not receive such books
 “ from those by whom they were first taught the Christian doctrine ;” that “ the copies had been written out
 “ with their own hands ;” and that they were not “ able
 “ to produce the copies from whence they transcribed
 “ these things.”

ⁱ Lardner's translation.

“ for which reason they have without fear laid
 “ their hands upon the divine Scriptures, say-
 “ ing, that they have amended them. And
 “ that I do not charge them falsely any one
 “ may know that pleaseth. For if any one
 “ will be at the pains to procure a number of
 “ their copies, and compare them together, he
 “ will find, that they disagree very much.
 “ For the copies of Asclepiades (or Asclepio-
 “ dotus) differ from those of Theodotus. And
 “ many of them may be met with, because
 “ their disciples have diligently transcribed
 “ their several emendations, as they call them,
 “ but indeed corruptions. Again, the copies
 “ of Hermophilus agree not with these already
 “ mentioned. And those of Apollonides (or
 “ Apollonius) differ one from another: for
 “ any one, by comparing those first put out
 “ with these, which were afterwards again
 “ perverted by him, may perceive a difference.
 “ How daring a crime this is, possibly they
 “ themselves are not ignorant: for either they
 “ do not believe the divine Scriptures to have
 “ been dictated by the Holy Spirit, and then
 “ they are infidels; or else they think them-
 “ selves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and what
 “ are they then but mad men? For they can-
 “ not deny this their daring crime, since the

“ copies have been writ out with their own hands; and they did not receive such books from those by whom they were first taught the Christian doctrine: nor are they able to produce the copies, from whence they transcribed these things^k.” To this extract it has been objected, “ that it is probable that all the alterations or corruptions complained of concerned only the copies of the Old Testament.” But a passage in a preceding part of the citation, expressed in similar language, will not permit us to avail ourselves of the advantage, if advantage it can be called, of transferring these corruptions to other authentic books. “ Moreover,” says the same author, “ they have without fear corrupted the divine Scriptures, and have rejected the rule or canon of the ancient faith, and have been ignorant of Christ^l.”

^k Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. vers. fin.

^l To this passage I may add others from Lardner himself, which shew that the Scriptures of the New, and not the Old Testament, were the subject of this citation.

1. “ The design of the first passage of this work is to shew the novelty of that heresy, that our Saviour was a mere man; whereas the persons against whom the author writes asserted its antiquity.” We may now observe how the subsequent passages relate to this topic, and consequently to those books which contain it,

It is not perhaps a correct assertion of the

2. "For they say, that all the ancients, and even the Apostles themselves, received and taught the same things which they now hold; and that the truth of the Gospel was preserved till the time of Victor: but by his successor (or, from the time of his successor) Zephyrine the truth has been corrupted." The words "of the Gospel" are inserted by Lardner. I do not mean that the sense of the passage does not justify such an insertion; but it evinces how he himself understood the tendency of the quotation.

3. "And possibly what they say might have been credited, if, first of all, the divine Scriptures did not contradict them; and then also, secondly, the writings of brethren more ancient than Victor, which they published in defence of the truth against the Gentiles, and against the heresies of their time." "The brethren mentioned by name," proceeds Lardner, "are Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, Clement, Irenæus, Melito, with a general appeal to many more not named, and to ancient hymns, composed by the faithful in honour of Christ." Lardner has not given the full import of the sentence. "Who is unacquainted with the books of Irenæus, and Melito, and the rest, which declare the Christ to be God and man? How many psalms and hymns, composed long since by faithful brethren, celebrate and ascribe divinity to the Christ the Word of God!" This is what was said "in honour of Christ."

4. "There was one Natalis, a confessor, not long ago, but in our times. This person was deceived by Asclepiodatus, and another, Theodotus, a banker, both disciples of the first, who had been excommunicated by Victor for this opinion, or rather madness." It was

very learned author of the Canon of the New

before alledged by the heretics, that the "truth of the Gospel," or their own opinion, was preserved till the "time of Victor." To which it is replied, that "what they say might have been credited, if, first of all, the divine Scriptures did not contradict them; and then also, secondly, the writings of brethren more ancient than Victor, which they published in defence of the truth against the Gentiles, and against the heresies of their time." I must consider all these portions of the extract, which I have separated into these divisions in order to examine them minutely; and I see no reason why they are not to be considered as forming, not so much the introduction, as a part of the citation itself, which is said to refer to the Old Testament. If so, there is a great confusion in the references; for in the above passage "writings more ancient than Victor" would not be associated with "the divine Scriptures" in the preceding sentence, unless the periods of both approximated to each other.

5. "They did not receive such books from those by whom they were first taught the Christian doctrine." I must first observe, that the words "Christian doctrine" are an addition of Lardner. I think therefore that I am authorized by these passages to conclude, that the subjects of them were, the Christian doctrine and the Christian scriptures. The termination of the extract relates, it may be supposed, in part to the Old Testament. "Nay, some of them have not thought it worth the while to corrupt the Scriptures, but, plainly rejecting the law and the prophets, by means of a lawless and impious doctrine, [taken up] under pretence of grace, they have fallen into the lowest pit of destruction." I can-

Testament, that certain heretics agreed “ in

not acquiesce in Lardner’s inference, “ that they are “ therefore the scriptures of the Old Testament that he “ had been speaking of all along, when he complained “ of the alterations of the divine Scriptures.” These persons seem to have rejected all the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, and were satisfied that grace was sufficient without either.

6. “ And since these alterations were made, or attempted to be made, in a version only, (some Greek version of the Old Testament, probably that of the “ Seventy,) the damage is the less.” I do not perceive what is gained by transferring the injury to the Greek version of the Seventy, even if that were the subject of the citation. But the alterations evidently related to a doctrine, the antiquity of which is not carried higher by the disputants themselves than the time of the Apostles. “ For they say, that all the ancients, and even the “ Apostles themselves, received and taught the same “ things which they now hold.”

7. “ It is reasonable to make some abatements in the “ charges of this writer. He blames these persons, against “ whom he writes, for things in which there is no fault. “ He censures them for studying geometry, and for admiring Aristotle and Theophrastus.” This is not candid. He explains it by saying, that they did not enquire “ what the divine Scriptures say,” but “ carefully” studied “ what figure of syllogism may be found out to “ support their impious system. And if any one object “ to them a text of divine Scripture, they consider whether a conjunctive or disjunctive form of syllogism can “ be made of it. He does not censure the study of geometry in the abstract : he expressly specifies, that, “ leav-

“receiving and esteeming a spurious work

“*ing the holy scriptures of God, they study geometry, as being of the earth, and speaking of the earth, and ignorant of him that cometh from above.*”

8. “Possibly they only joined together these two studies.” That is not improbable, I allow; but how were they conjoined? He speaks of them as persons “who *abuse the sciences of the infidels for the support of their heretical sentiment, and with an impious subtlety adulterate the simple faith of the divine Scriptures.*”

9. “He insinuates too, that some of them adored Galen, which is very improbable.” The improbability here is against the respectable author: Galen was a dialectician of great eminence. Lardner could scarcely be ignorant of this note of Valesius on this passage: “*Galenus enim de figuris syllogismorum et de tota philosophia libros conscripserat, ut ex librorum ejus indice cognoscimus.—Nec vero ex hoc tantum scriptore, verum etiam ex aliis quamplurimis idem colligere licet, qui Galenum Aristoteli ac Theophrasto, ipsique adeo Platoni æquare non dubitarunt.*” And then follows a passage in confirmation of this fact from Alexander Aphrodisiensis. I may perhaps be allowed to use the authority of this extract from Eusebius to explain the reason why Aristotle, Theophrastus, and a work of Galen, *Περὶ Φιλοσοφικῶν Ἰδεῶν*, are found together in the splendid collection of these writers printed by Aldus. They are thus associated, and perhaps not casually, in the magnificent copies on vellum and paper.

I cannot but remark, that Lardner has translated the passage from Eusebius as if he understood it as the generality of readers would understand its tendency, and has reasoned from it in opposition to the words which he

“above all other scriptures^m.” The Encratites are said to have used *principally* those writings entitled the Acts of Andrew and John, the Apostolici to have depended *chiefly* upon them, and the Manichees to have used them; but it does not follow that they rejected the Scriptures, because they received books of this kind: it rather seems that the authority of each was distinct and independent. The Scriptures still maintained, even in the estimation of the heretics themselves, an use and an importance, which certainly were not destroyed, nor even impaired, by being associated with fictitious compositions. We may be allowed to conclude likewise, that these forgeries were used without any intention to vilify the genuine Scriptures, and without any attempt to corrupt them, however contrary to the Scriptures those doctrines might be, which the heretics introduced into

has, justifiably indeed, added to his version, but which restrict all, except the conclusion of the citation, to the subject of the doctrine of the New Testament respecting our Saviour's nature, and the alteration of the copies of the New Testament; and even the last part respects the abuse of a doctrine peculiar to the Gospel of Christ. Is this one of the early intimations of the abuse of the doctrine of grace?

^m Jones, vol. i. p. 148.

such writings. This distinction is precisely and satisfactorily observed in the account of the practices of the Sabellians by Epiphanius; and probably the other heretical sects acted in the same manner. ⁿ“ They make use of
“ all the Scriptures both of the Old and New
“ Testament; but principally of some certain
“ passages, which they pick out according to
“ their own corrupt and preposterous senti-
“ ments. But the whole of their errors, and
“ the main strength of their heterodoxy, they
“ have from some apocryphal books, but prin-
“ cipally from that which is called the Gospel
“ of the Egyptians.”

The next instance, from which we may deduce a probable argument respecting the state of the Scriptures, is the life of Pythagoras by Jamblichus, who has been supposed to write this character with a view to put it in competition with that of our Saviour. I am not ignorant that this intention is disputed by an able and learned writer, but perhaps without sufficient reason. In representing Pythagoras as equal in every respect to our Saviour, the author found it necessary, in the adaptation of this fictitious resemblance, not merely to make

ⁿ Jones, Canon of the New Test. vol. i. p. 200.

him a rival teacher of morality, but to assign to him a divine descent. He is described to have had God as his father, and to have been himself a god in the form of man for the sake of men, lest they might be overpowered by the greatness of his majesty, and thus be deterred from becoming his disciples. The author of "The Diffonance" has asserted, as I have remarked in a preceding Lecture, that St. Matthew and St. Luke formed their genealogies of our Saviour on the model of the ancient mythology. But in this account of the origin of Pythagoras we may observe a striking and characteristic variation. It is not adjusted to the principles, if they may be so called, of the Pagan theogony. In this the parent deities had previously passed through the state of humanity. In the comparison of Pythagoras with our Saviour, the former is said to be a god, and the son of God, with the form of man. The beneficence to men followed from his power as a god, but was not the cause of a subsequent deification. If however it be a correct observation of ° Lardner, who is learned and judicious, but not always unprejudiced, when he affirms of the

° Vol. viii. p. 283. orig. ed. in 17 vol.

authors of the different lives of Pythagoras, “that they have said nothing new of him;” “nothing, but what had been often said of him before the appearance of the Christian religion in the world;” then the latter Platonists had no inducement to alter the Gospels in this important particular, the divinity of our Lord, or to accommodate the older accounts of Pythagoras to the evangelical standard of perfection.

We have reason then to conclude, that Christianity, upon its first publication in writing, would not have been exposed to any peculiar danger even from the previous appearance of spurious and apocryphal books. There was a greater peril, which arose from falsified copies of the genuine Scriptures. But still there was the same mode, not indeed of avoiding, but of passing through both these kinds of trial. We certainly cannot resolve the reception of the records of Christianity into the degrading advantage of having preoccupied the attention of mankind, but must deduce their superior dispersion, in opposition to what was either intrinsically base, or partially vitiated, as the result of extensive and equal investigation.

SERMON VI.

2 PET. i. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

PURSUING the investigation respecting the authenticity of the writings of the New Testament, I am next to consider in what manner the genealogy, and the two first chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, were received in the early ages. The subject has been frequently discussed by theological writers, but something may still remain for subsequent enquiry. All the facts respecting this subject may not have been collected, and the conclusions, which the well known facts suggest, may differ according to the peculiar object of the writer, and the extent of his previous examination of the question.

The genealogy of Christ in the beginning of this Gospel has been rejected by some on account of an alledged deficiency both in the internal and external evidence of its authen-

ticity. The author of ^a “The Diffonance” is satisfied with boldly asserting “its irreconcilable contradiction to that introduced into “St. Luke’s Gospel.” ^b Others affirm, that some of the ancient sects of Christians received a copy of St. Matthew’s Gospel “which had “not the genealogy.” If this be intended to imply, that such was the original state of the volume, it is a falsification of its history. We know that one of these sects removed it from its ancient and proper place by sinister means, as by erasure, or excision; and then we are to be informed, that the genuine copy did not contain the genealogy. It is extraordinary that it should be taken away without assigning any reason relative to its want of authenticity. The persons who removed or expunged it were interested in the exposure of such an imposition as the insertion of what was repugnant to their peculiar opinions; and, instead of rejecting it under the pretext of disapprobation of the doctrines which it favoured,

^a Page 149.

^b Williams’s Free Enquiry into the authenticity of the first and second Chapters of St. Matthew’s Gospel, p. 33; and Dr. Priestley’s History of Early Opinions, vol. iii. p. 213.

^c Free Enquiry, p. 54.

should have stigmatized it as a forgery, and have justified their rejection of it in this manner. Had their pretensions been well founded, they might have proved from their own proximity to the time, when all the copies of the Gospel might be said to be recent, that they derived their tenets from the unadulterated and acknowledged language of Scripture; and they ought to have appealed for the proof of this to the numerous copies of the New Testament, dispersed among the faithful in various parts of the Christian world. But they do not alledge reasons of this kind. They do not say, that the genealogy was a novel and strange addition to this Gospel. They assign a speculative reason, the opposition of their own opinions to the written word, when they ought to have produced direct evidence from the consent of the greater part of the transcripts that the obnoxious portion was an interpolation; and they should have determined and specified the time of its insertion. Both common sense and vulgar honesty concurred in dictating this mode of conduct; these superseded the authority of criticism, and imposed upon them the necessity of collating copies, as an office of candour and integrity, and not an effort of learning

and ingenuity. They did not collate, because such a reference and comparison would have been destructive of the opinions which they wished to support, because it would have appeared that the genealogy was contained in all the authentic copies. Tatian indeed is said to have omitted in his Diatessaron "the genealogies; and every thing that shewed the Lord to have been born of the seed of David according to the flesh." Hence it has been argued^d, that Tatian "would not use any copies of the Gospels but what were known to be authentic;" and therefore the authentic copies did not contain the genealogy. But, allowing more force to this argument of the author of the Free Enquiry than it deserves, it cannot be applied to a work which professed to be a compendium only, and therefore may reasonably be supposed to omit whatever was not comprehended within the plan of the abbreviator. If indeed Tatian had proposed to give transcripts of each of the former Gospels, instead of an epitome of them all, then the argument would have had some weight; but even as it is circumstanced at present, these supposed authentic copies of the

^d Free Enquiry, p. 54.

Gospels were not only without the genealogies, but likewise “ every thing that shewed “ the Lord to have been born of the seed of “ David according to the flesh.” It is however not only not reasonable, but it is in contradiction to fact, to extend the deficiency of Tatian’s Diatessaron to the originals from which he compiled that summary. Theodoret discovered in some Christian churches no less than two hundred copies of this work of Tatian, which he took away, and substituted in their place entire copies of the Gospels. The facility with which he supplied the Christian assemblies with so many entire and complete transcripts of the Gospels proves, that the heretics might alter by mutilation or insertion their own copies of the books of Scripture, without any impeachment of the integrity of those which were in the hands of others. In those churches which had received the Diatessaron of Tatian, enquiries would be made respecting the portions which had been omitted in that work, and now appeared in those volumes, which Theodoret had authoritatively substituted. Tatian’s book however had been used, ^c “ not only by those of his own sect,

^c Lardner, vol. ii. p. 138.

“ but also by them who follow the apostolical
“ doctrine, not perceiving the fraud of the
“ composition, but simply using it as a com-
“ pendious work.” This is no confirmation
of the opinion of those who assert, that the
Unitarian was the apostolical doctrine. These
persons, it seems, did not discover the omission
of any material parts. Shall we then say,
that the birth of our Lord according to the
flesh might, or might not, be inserted without
affecting the proofs of the Unitarian faith?
It is evident, that, from the time of Tatian in
the second century, to that of Theodoret in
the fifth, the knowledge of this deficiency in
the Diatessaron had not been so generally pro-
mulgated, as we may conceive it would have
been, if the majority of the members of the
apostolical church had been Unitarians. It
should also appear to be a remarkable incident,
that one of the fathers of the church, who
are so frequently accused of corrupting the
sacred volume through their zeal for ortho-
doxy, should furnish other copies of the Gos-
pels, which contained those passages, that, in
the interpretation of the Cerinthians, “ proved
“ the human descent of our Lord from the
“ seed of David according to the flesh,” and
which for this reason would have disposed

Theodoret to have recommended the use of the Diatessaron of Tatian. But the argument respecting Tatian's use of none but authentic copies is equivocal, and may be applied to affect the credit of Tatian himself, at least as much as it does that of the genealogies. We have no reason to think that Tatian would be very scrupulous respecting the authenticity of those copies of St. Matthew's Gospel which he consulted, when he published many opinions and doctrines repugnant to the principles contained in all the Gospels. He that condemned marriage as a diabolical institution would not be much interested in the preservation of the purity of a record, which gave to it a religious sanction. We are pressed however with meaner difficulties than these, which, if they do not increase the number or the force of the arguments of our adversaries, strongly characterize the spirit of their opposition. They insist, that there is "full proof" that the genealogy was questioned in very "early ages." It was the practice of several copyists to place the genealogy at some distance from the commencement of the Gospel; and hence it is concluded, that it did not constitute a part of the Gospel itself. We cannot believe that doubts respecting its authenticity

would produce only a peculiarity in the arrangement of the introductory passages. Are we to collect an opinion so important from the mechanical process of measuring the mystic interval between one sentence and another? Are these the usual indications of critical disapprobation? But to what other cause than imperfect enquiry can we ascribe the following assertion of the learned ^f translator of Michaelis, who informs us, that “ the writers of Latin “ manuscripts, who wrote the genealogy apart “ from the rest of the Gospel, were actuated “ not by critical, but theological motives. “ They found difficulty in reconciling the genealogy in Matth. i. with that of Luke iii. “ and therefore wished to get rid of it.” It is not pretended that the transcriber has intimated that there was any significant peculiarity in the collocation of the genealogy. When one ^g copyist has explicitly apprized the reader, that he “ omitted the story of the adulterous “ woman in the Gospel of St. John, as being “ wanting in most copies, and not mentioned “ by the holy fathers Chrysostom, Cyril, Theodorus, and others,” we are justified in ex-

^f Vol. iii. part ii. p. 139.

^g See Wettstein in loc. It is the Reuchlin MS.

pecting some explanation of this critical invention, the interposition of a certain interval between the genealogy and the commencement of the narrative; and we ought to be informed, that it is symbolical of suspected authenticity, or expressive of “the theological motives” of the transcribers. We cannot admit that any mode of placing the genealogy is equivalent to “getting rid of it.” It is supposed^h, “that the plain inconsistencies between this genealogy and the Old Testament history might easily be perceived, and suspicions concerning its authenticity be soon spread abroad.” But in what manner were these suspicions made known? Was the mode of disposing the genealogy among the means employed for this purpose? Was it the only evidence of such suspicions? If such suspicions were ever entertained, there were two unambiguous ways of communicating them to the assemblies of Christians; either an explicit declaration of the fact, or the absolute omission in the generality of copies of what was suspected. It seems however as if the genealogy existed as a document independent and unattached. Epiphanius re-

^h Free Enquiry, p. 36.

latesⁱ, that a Jew discovered in a cell of one of the treasuries at Tiberias, among other volumes, “the Hebrew stemmata according to “St. Matthew.” In whatever way we interpret these words of Epiphanius, whether they signify the portion of the Hebrew Gospel which had been cut away by some of the heretics; or whether they denote the whole Gospel, by expressing a part, still the reference to the writing is preserved, from which it derived its appellation and authority. It is admitted by the editors of “the improved version,” as it is called, “of the New Testament,” that the genealogy was in the copies “at least of Cerinthus and Carpocrates.” It is somewhat extraordinary that this concession should be made in favour of the present Greek Gospel, when Cerinthus and Carpocrates certainly used the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which was written in the Syro-Chal-

ⁱ Jones has noticed this passage of Epiphanius, but translated *φυτὸν*, *Gospel*. Οὐ μὲν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Ἑβραϊκὸν *φυτὸν*. Epiphan. adv. Hær. p. 130. ed. Petav. The author of the Free Enquiry has spoken of it in the same manner: “Epiphanius says, that a Jew named Joseph found in a cell at Tiberias the Hebrew Gospel ascribed to St. Matthew.” He refers to Mosheim de Reb. Christian. p. 207, whence he had the reference to Epiphanius.

daic dialect. This Gospel, which had its double appellation from the Jewish party who received it, and from the Evangelist Matthew, whose narrative it professed to follow, was used by the Nazarenes, Cerinthians, and Ebionites; but it underwent some change in the hands of the latter sect. The Nazarenes do not seem to have altered their copy in any known respect; and Epiphanius calls it "most entire." The Ebionites had introduced unauthorized additions, and had mutilated the commencement of it; and the same Father terms this "not wholly entire." It is thought, however, that Epiphanius does not consistently apply the epithet "most entire" to the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and at the same time expresses his ignorance, "whether they had taken away the genealogy from Abraham to Christ." * "With what propriety," it is asked, "could he say that it was most entire, if he suspected that any genuine part of it was taken away?" But he did not suspect; his want of information precluded suspicion. He speaks in the same dubious language of the opinions of the Nazarenes concerning the nature of Christ: "I cannot affirm," he says,

* Free Enquiry, p. 74.

“ whether, carried away by the impiety of
“ Cerinthus and Merinthus, they consider him
“ as a mere man ; or, as the truth is, that he
“ was begotten of Mary by the Holy Ghost.”
It may perhaps be doubted whether a late
learned Prelate, in his reply to the writer of
“ the History of the Corruptions of Christ-
“ tianity,” has not impaired the general cre-
dibility of the evidence of the ancient Father
by the extent of his censure. ¹“ The confes-
“ sion of Epiphanius amounts,” he thinks,
“ to that of a base accuser, who had not the
“ liberality to absolve in explicit terms, when
“ he found himself unable to convict.” If
this were a just character of the evidence of
the historian in this instance, it would be im-
proper to appeal to it in any question relative
to the tenets of particular sects. It appears
however, upon a careful comparison of the
two passages, that one doubt depended upon
another ; that the rejection of the genealogy
would have ascertained their opinion concern-
ing Christ, or the knowledge of this opinion
would have determined the fact of the rejec-
tion of the genealogy. His language is cer-
tainly not reconcileable with the supposition,

¹ Horsley's Tracts, p. 144.

that he had seen the Hebrew Gospel of the Nazarenes; but no other reason is assigned for his having seen it, than that he ^m was a native of Palestine. This argument will only shew, that he could not be ignorant of the contents of a certain book, because he was a native of the country where the persons lived who used it, and where the particular place was situated in which it was preserved. The morality of the Father will not be impeached by the mere authority of the objectors, whose surmises cannot be admitted without proof. Cerinthus and Carpocrates appealed to the genealogy as authority for their respective opinions; and the Cerinthians used the Gospel according to Matthew on account of ⁿ “ the carnal genealogy,” as it is expressed by Epiphanius. The Ebionites rejected the genealogy. It has been before observed^o, that the editors of the improved version of the New Testament admit the authenticity of the ge-

^m Free Enquiry, p. 84. “ It is not credible that he “ was unacquainted with the Nazarene Gospel,” and the reason of this opinion is subjoined in a note, “ as he was “ a native of Palestine.”

ⁿ Διὰ τὴν ἐνσάρκον γενεαλόγιαν are the words of Epiphanius.

^o Page 186.

nealogy in the Greek Gospel on the authority of its insertion in the Hebrew Gospel of the Nazarenes, which, it has been conjectured, was the original of St. Matthew. It is not my intention to consider the question, whether the Greek of St. Matthew is a version from the Hebrew, not only because it has been so often discussed before, but because it must be nearly a mere conjectural enquiry from the paucity of historical facts. But such facts as remain are in favour of Greek originals, and Syro-Chaldaic versions. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews retired to Tiberias; where they established synagogues and schools, and preserved their writings. In a cell of one of the treasuries at Tiberias, Hebrew versions, as they are called, were found of those books of the New Testament which are allowed to have been originally written in the Greek language. It may also be remarked, that whatever force there may be in the observation of the author of the History of the early Opinions concerning Christ, respecting a Hebrew version of the Gospel of St. John, it is in favour of the orthodox faith. P "Though " this Gospel," says he, " was written in

“Greek, there were not wanting among the
 “Jewish Christians men of learning, who
 “would not have failed to give an account
 “of it to their more ignorant countrymen,
 “or to translate it for their use, if it had been
 “thought necessary.” Whether the version
 were undertaken because it was “thought
 “necessary,” we are not informed; but only
 that the books of the New Testament, to
 which I before alluded as existing in Hebrew
 versions, were, the Acts of the Apostles, and
 this very Gospel of St. John. We are not
 told by Epiphanius, who has recorded the
 fact, whether this Gospel were spurious, or
 mutilated, or entire; but he describes it as a
 translation from the Greek: and we may sup-
 pose, that it had at least as good a title to be
 called the Gospel of St. John, as the Gospel of
 St. Matthew, used by the Nazarenes, had to
 be denominated after that Evangelist. It is
 argued, however, that the mutilation or cor-
 ruption of St. Matthew’s Gospel could not be
 effected at all, because it could not be effected
 without discovery; and that it would have
 created new divisions among the heretical bre-
 thren, ^a “of which we have not the least foot-

^a Free Enquiry, p. 72.

“ steps in all antiquity.” But this is assuming, that the state of the books of Scripture determined the existence of sects, and particularly of those, which owed their origin to their different opinions concerning the nature of Christ. But there is reason to think that these opinions were adopted independently of the language of scripture, and applied as the standard of its reception, without any view to the consideration of its ^{critical} ~~scriptural~~ authority. The fear of discovery did not operate in preventing the Ebionites from mutilating their Gospel without reserve, and from effecting, without any recorded endeavour to conceal it, the excision of its commencement. Marcion indeed seems to have been restrained by some motive from ascribing his Gospel to an Evangelist, after he had adapted it to his own sentiments; and Tertullian reproaches him with this silence, as an attempt to veil his fraud from the world: but still the fear of detection only produced the endeavour to conceal what he had done, but did not influence him so strongly as to cause him to abstain from his purpose. We may also enquire, who were the heretics that were to be still further divided by altering this Gospel, which was common to them all? Those certainly, who maintained doctrines which those parts

of the Gospel, that were either to be retained or taken away, confirmed or opposed. These then must have been the Nazarenes, the Ebionites, Cerinthians, and Carpocratians. The Nazarenes had not perhaps altered the Gospel in any respect. Cerinthus and the Cerinthians used it because it contained the genealogy, and shewed the human descent of our Saviour; Carpocrates adopted it for the same reason, but the Ebionites rejected it. It is clear then that the sects were already separated; that their difference of opinion influenced their notion of the standard of their Gospel, and that the preservation merely of the integrity of the Scripture would not have diminished the number of contending parties, because their differences did not originate from this source. Another expedient has been suggested, which, if there were any foundation for the apprehension of multiplying divisions among the heretics, by the erasure of the genealogy, or of the two first chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, would not have obviated the expected consequence. "There was another way, by which Cerinthus and the other heretics might get clear of this difficulty, without

“expunging two whole chapters; they might have rejected St. Matthew’s Gospel altogether, and acknowledged St. Mark’s as alone authentic.” It is not easy to understand how the rejection of the entire Gospel would have promoted unanimity, when the extinction of two chapters would have occasioned a new separation among the sects. But whatever advantage might have accrued to the sects in preferring St. Mark’s Gospel, which required no adaptation to their purpose, at least of the same violent kind, yet we must allow the ancient sects to have understood their own reasons for separation from each other better than we can in the present age. There must still have been something in St. Matthew’s Gospel, even when mutilated by themselves, which they preferred to that of St. Mark, which did not accord so well with their own peculiar objects and sentiments. Our opponents are not unwilling to admit that Cerinthus and Carpocrates were not ^s “afraid of these two chapters, as unfavourable to their peculiar opinions.” Here then we might hope to conclude the argument with this acknowledgment: but it does

^s Free Enquiry, p. 72.

not terminate at this point. The age of Cerinthus, it is alledged, is to be referred to a later period than is usually assigned, because the two chapters in question are not distinctly alluded to before the second century. But it must be observed, that the passages, to which these references are made by the Fathers, who flourished in the second century, occur in the Greek copy, which we now have; and they did not cite, as Cerinthus and Carpocrates did, a Hebrew Gospel. It should also be remembered, that, in this controversy respecting the genealogy and the two first chapters of St. Matthew, the parties appeal indiscriminately to the copy used by Cerinthus and the Ebionites, which was the Gospel according to the Hebrews; and the Greek copy, which those Fathers used, who could not use any other, on account of their ignorance of the Syro-Chaldaic language. The want of references to these chapters in the writings of the apostolical Fathers is to be accounted for on the supposition, that there was not a proper occasion to introduce them. Their debates with Jewish unbelievers were not of a kind, probably, to require an appeal to this part of the Gospel. The preceptive and hortatory portions of Scripture were more adapt-

ed to their pastoral addresses than proofs of controverted subjects. But the martyr Justin has made such frequent appeals to these chapters, that the author of the History of the Early Opinions says, “ that it is almost certain that the story of the miraculous conception was in the received Gospels of Matthew and Luke in the time of Justin Martyr.” We are not however to employ this evidence, because it is doubted whether these facts were in all the copies of the Gospel in that age. We do not indeed pretend to know what was in all the copies of that age, nor what particular copy each ancient Father might have used ; but the historical evidence which we now possess relates to a period prior to the times of Justin : and we are told that from the Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew one set of heretics erased the two first chapters, and another set retained them. Whether the Greek copies underwent, at that time, the same alteration, or were adopted entire, it is impossible now to ascertain. It is important, however, to know upon what grounds the sects mutilated the books which they received. They do not speak of copies which did not

originally contain what they expunged, but condemn the passages from their contrariety to their own tenets. But there is another mode of reasoning, which would annihilate all historical testimony, and not that of Justin only. “ The argument of general reception we use in favour of Christianity, and with great justice; because this made its way amidst the greatest opposition, and the most dreadful persecution. But this cannot be said with respect to any particular system of opinions contained, or supposed to be contained, in the New Testament. These therefore may have not only found their way, but may have become very prevalent, among Christians, without having gone through a proper discussion. And as this may have been the case in Justin’s age, as well as in any other, no conclusion can be drawn from his mere declaration, that any particular doctrine which he advances is to be regarded as part of the original Gospel of Jesus Christ.” There is a peculiarity in the facts of the Gospel, of which this adversary has availed himself, and that will admit of a double interpretation. The facts related in

^u Pope on the Miraculous Conception, p. 205.

the Gospel are not merely historical anecdotes, but are to be considered as objects both of historical and religious belief. When therefore it is said that any particular doctrine, which an ancient Father advances, is not to be regarded, from the authority of his mere declaration, as part of the original Gospel of Jesus Christ, we have no hesitation in assenting to this position. But when the particular doctrine is also a fact, as the miraculous conception, and the declaration of the Father is a reference to the history, of which the miraculous conception is one of the events, the testimony of the Father is of the greatest weight, when conjoined with the agreement of the copies of the history with his citations or allusions. But it is said, first, that these doctrines had not, at the time of Justin, been properly discussed. And again, another adversary affirms, that the chapters containing the doctrines are not noticed till the second century; which, whilst it allows time for the discussion, supposed to have been so necessary by the other opponent, detracts on the other side from their antiquity. But the fact is otherwise. The early divisions in the church were founded on difference of opinion relating to the nature of Christ; and it was in consequence of opinions,

formed upon the discussion of parties separating from one another upon such enquiries, that the Hebrew Gospel was mutilated and corrupted. It is in consequence of the perversion of the prophecy of Isaiah by the Jew Trypho that Justin Martyr adduces the passages relating to the miraculous conception; and we may conclude that this conference, whether real or fictitious, related to topics which formed the most interesting subjects of discussion in that age. It would also follow from the preceding hypothesis, what cannot be proved, that Justin could not use any transcripts of the Gospel but those which had been made within the period of his own life.

The internal evidence of these chapters has been so frequently impugned by the same objections, and defended by such well known arguments, that it is necessary to select such of the former as will admit of some novelty in the reply. The author of "The Diffonance" asserts, "that they contain many wonderful circumstances, repugnant to the other scriptures, and to common sense, and unsupported by any other history, sacred or profane." Some of these circumstances, as the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem, guided by some celestial phenomenon, the declaration of

the object of their journey, the alarm of Herod, and the solicitude of the whole Jewish capital, form a natural combination of incidents, not impossible indeed to be forged, but agreeable to every test of moral certainty ; as, if false, the imposition would be so easily detected, from the publicity with which the facts are said to have been transacted, and the numerous opportunities of minute examination to which they were subjected. We cannot draw from this, or any other consideration deduced from the narrative itself, a positive conclusion that the events were real, but we do not see any defects in this argument which diminish its probability. The pretended repugnancy of the facts to Scripture is said to consist in the selection of a description of persons to announce the Messiah, whose art had been ridiculed by the ancient prophets, and who, when they appeared among the Jews, were to be put to death. Not satisfied, however, with this mode of opposition, our adversary proceeds in the spirit of infidelity to reduce it to a mere case of judicial astrology. There may be perhaps casual resemblance enough to afford a pretence for the perverted analogy of the scorner, but there must exist an essential difference in the nature of these

instances, which shall leave no doubt respecting the folly and the impiety of the comparison. In the first place, the similarity arises from the literal interpretation of the word *star*, which does not necessarily denote a heavenly body of that kind. It was not Sirius, nor Arcturus, that was so indicated, nor any of the planets, but a luminous appearance in the skies, sufficiently distinct to guide their steps; resembling in its purpose, though not perhaps exactly in its appearance, the pillar of light that directed the Israelites, when they were conducted by the prophet of the Lord from Egyptian bondage and idolatry, to liberty, and the worship of the true God. Admitting that genethiology were a branch of astrological knowledge cultivated in the time of our Saviour, and that there were judicial astrologers coeval with the Jewish prophets, and the subjects of the denunciations of the Almighty, it is still a question whether this star, as it is termed, would have supplied any data whatever for the process of the astrologer. His art is founded upon the appearances, and arbitrary arrangements and fictitious qualities, of the known stars and constellations; but the Magi were called away before they could have time to ascertain the

nature of this new light, its course and aspect, or whether, in short, it could be used at all (from its *doubtful permanency) in any of their computations. But it is useless to protract the discussion of these matters according to the principles of the art. The author of "The Diffonance" speaks of the Almighty as y "permitting Pagan diviners to discover the "nativity of the promised Messiah by their "skill in astrology." He has here confounded the calculation with the prediction of the nativity. In the calculation of a nativity, the birth of the particular individual is assumed, and the computation of the astrologer commences from this period. He does not in this case predict the time of the nativity of the individual, but foretells, from the known circumstances of this fact, the future events of his life. The

* I had reasoned this as well as I was able, without an opportunity of recurring to any authority. I am now happy in being able to refer to Picus of Mirandula in confirmation of what I had advanced. "*Et ecce stella, &c. Quod nemo, nisi insaniens, existimabit de cœli sideribus configurationibusque esse intelligendum. Erat igitur illa fastitia, et temporaria, non perpetua stella et naturalis, condita ad id officii a Creatore, per quam significari natum regem Judæorum.*" In Astrol. lib. iv. c. 15. tom. i. p. 370. edit. Basil.

y Diffonance, p. 155.

celebrated Cardan computed, as it is expressed, according to the technical jargon of the art, his own nativity, which he did without any violation of the rules of this absurd system, but which must have been an obvious impossibility if this phrase, according to its acceptance by the author of "The Diffonance," never denoted any thing but a prediction of a birth. These things may appear to be unbecoming the dignity of this place, and unworthy of the attention of a learned assembly; but an objector may perhaps triumph more in retaining possession of a source of ridicule, than in defending himself against the most subtle and recondite argument.

The next objection, which furnishes materials for a continued discussion, relates to the alledged ignorance of St. Matthew respecting the geography of Palestine, evinced in the conclusion of the second of the disputed chapters. When St. Matthew relates, that multitudes of people followed Jesus from Decapolis, it is said to be an error indicating great ignorance, because, according to the author of "The Diffonance," it is *evident*, that the Decapolis "was not any country or continued district, as the pretended Matthew and Mark represent it, but merely the general appellation

“ of the detached insulated cities, lying all,
 “ except Scythopolis, beyond, or east of the
 “ river Jordan, which in later times were
 “ taken from the jurisdiction of the original
 “ tetrarchies, and made subject to Syria.”

Pliny, however, speaks of the ^aDecapolitan region as adjoining on one side to Syria; and in another passage he describes it as being situated inland from Anti-Libanus. Here he uses the formal and precise language of a geographer; but, even in speaking of the same tract, he familiarly calls it the Decapolis of Syria, and ^bcommends the excellence of one of its peculiar productions, which would scarcely allow of the appropriation of it to one of these detached cities. Augustus united ^ctwo, and not three towns of the Decapolis to Syria; and it is argued, that, as no other distribution of Palestine took place till the twelfth year of Claudius, the term Decapolis,

^a Jungitur ei latere Syriæ Decapolitana regio a numero oppidorum, *in quo non omnes eadem observant*. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. v. c. 18.

^b Decapoli Syriæ perquam parvæ (olivæ scil.) carne tamen commendantur; quam ob causam Italicis transmarinæ præferuntur in cibis, quum oleo vincantur. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xv. c. 3.

^c Gaza was not one; Gadara and Hippos were the others.

in whatever sense we take it, could not have had existence when St. Matthew is said to have written his Gospel. If this annexation of these cities to Syria were the foundation of the distinction of the Decapolis, the name could not have been given till the whole decad were included within the province. But Pliny expressly says, that the tetrarchies surrounded some, and were intermixed with others of the constituent cities. We may therefore be permitted to conjecture, without refining upon slight intimations, that as the Decapolitan region retained its designation, notwithstanding its ^d intersection by the division of the country into tetrarchies, that the Decapolis was a more ancient distribution and appellation than the tetrarchies themselves, and related to a period when the ten cities were conjoined by some bond of union, the memory of which remained, but its exact nature was not expressed in the denomination of Decapolis. We may also appeal to a ^e Palmyrene inscription for the

^d “ *Intercursant, cinguntque has urbes tetrarchiæ, regionum instar, singulæ, et in regna contribuuntur.*” Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. v. c. 18. And in another passage; “ *Post eum introrsus Decapolitana regio, prædictæque cum ea tetrarchiæ.*” Lib. v. c. 20.

• *Nec alia est Abila, quæ Decapoli attribuitur in in-*

duration of the name, to whatever age the antiquarian enquirer may assign this monument. It is necessary also to remark, that the testimony of Pliny is not the testimony of writers of his own times only, but also of more ancient historians and geographers, who had either themselves seen the countries which they described, or followed the accounts of those who had travelled in that part of the world. Our opponent, however, produces a supplementary objection. He asserts, that the author of the Gospel speaks of it as a country ^f “ which did not lie eastward of Jordan, because he expressly distinguishes it from the “ country beyond Jordan.” But he cannot think of any distinctions which may reconcile an apparent contradiction. The multitudes who assembled to hear our Saviour came from every quarter ; and the Evangelist, by specifying the Decapolis, included but a part of the country beyond Jordan. The ^g Jewish historian has distinguished the tetrarchy of Gaulo-

scriptione veteri, quæ extat n. 3. inter monumenta Palmyrena, quæ cum scholiis Edvardi Bernardi et Thomæ Smith prodierunt ubi legitur ΑΓΑΘΑΝΤΕΛΟΣ ΑΒΙΑΗ-ΝΟΣ ΔΕΚΑΠΟΛΕΟΣ. Reland. Pal. p. 525.

^f Diffonance, p. 165.

^g Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. c. 13. et de Bell. lib. iii. c. 2.

nitis from the country beyond Jordan, not because they were situated on different sides of that river, but because the former did not comprehend the latter. We may here pause, and observe on what foundation the whole argument has been raised. It depends merely upon the date, which has been arbitrarily ascribed to the publication of St. Matthew's Gospel. If we admit that the argument has been successful, it will only invalidate the probable assumption of some writers on the canon of the New Testament. It will not affect the veracity of any historian whatever. And why should not some latitude be allowed in determining a point of much obscurity, which again rests upon such circumstances as these; at what precise year a written Gospel became necessary, was then undertaken, and at last completed and divulged?

SERMON VII.

2 PET. i. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

THE establishment of the church of Constantine is said by the author of "The Dissolution" to be signified by "the apostasy from the truths of the Gospel, predicted in different scriptures of the New Testament." The question will not be misrepresented, if we understand the establishment of the church of Constantine to be equivalent, in the meaning of our opponent, to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the state. The import of the accusation is, that this religion was derived from corrupted copies of the books of Scripture. The incarnation of our Saviour is described as a fundamental doctrine of this church, and the tendency of the adoption of corrupted books was to authorize and diffuse this interpolated tenet. It may be remarked, that the corruption of the books of

Scripture, to which this apostasy is attributed, is said in "The Diffonance" to have been effected in the latter part of the second century. From this period, then, downwards to the age of Constantine, the obnoxious opinions must have been spreading among those who used the adulterated volumes; that is, for the space of more than a century and a half: and yet the failure of the true faith is not supposed to have become general, till it can be invidiously represented, that it then corresponded with the terms of the predictions, when it had acquired the sanction of the civil magistrate.

It does not appear that the state of the books of the Christians was ever examined by Constantine, or that he decreed that certain books, and no others, should be received as the standard of the Christian faith throughout the Roman empire. We can only alledge, that the ecclesiastical annals do not furnish a direct reply to the position, that the corruptions of the books, which had been admitted or suggested before, were established, as far as the influence of political power extended, under the administration of Constantine. We must therefore attempt by some circuitous enquiry to discover facts, which may invalidate

objections that originate solely in the silence of history ; and which, it should be remarked, is silent only, and not defective. The edict of Milan, whether we adopt the words of the ^a historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, in speaking of its tendency, or extract a portion of the edict itself, granted such absolute permission to persons of every religious denomination to follow their own tenets, that they could not be restricted to any particular source, or to the use of certain books, from which they were expected to derive them. “ The indulgence which we have “ granted in matters of religion,” say Constantine and Licinius in their edict, “ is ample “ and unconditional ; and that you might perceive, at the same time, that the open and “ free exercise of their respective religions is “ granted to all others, as well as to the Christians.” It was also provided, that no man should be denied leave “ of attaching himself “ to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever “ other religion his mind directed him to.” That Licinius did not adhere to the terms of this declaration, is not denied ; but his col-

^a Gibbon, vol. iii. p. 244, 245. edit. 8vo. De Mort. Persec. translated by Sir D. Dalrymple, p. 114.

league, when he possessed the empire undivided, was so far from revoking it, that the ^b historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire has been induced to consider some of its provisions as having the same authority with "the maxims of the civil law." But Constantine afterwards violated, rather than retracted, the privileges which this edict conferred. Heretics were distinguished from other believers, and not merely excluded from a participation with the orthodox in their civil distinctions. By the confession of Eusebius, the places of their religious assemblies were destroyed, and persons were considered as heretics when they were discovered to have in their possession certain books. From these circumstances we may infer what was the operation of the edict of Milan in those parts of the empire more immediately subject to the government of Constantine. The mere establishment of Christianity by the state, without

^b "The edict of Milan (de Mort. Perf. c. 48.) acknowledges, by reciting that there existed a species of landed property 'ad jus corporis eorum, id est, ecclesiarum, non hominum singulorum pertinentia.' Such a solemn declaration of the supreme magistrate must have been received in all the tribunals as a maxim of civil law." Gibbon, vol. iii. p. 306. edit. 8vo.

a toleration of all the subdivisions of its sects, would not have been favourable to the interests of religion at that time. This toleration indeed might in part be attributed to the indifference of Licinius towards all modes of religion; and to Constantine also, who was not yet qualified by information, or induced by interest or persuasion, to distinguish one form of opinion among Christians from another. It is indeed curious to contemplate the strength which the different bodies of the heretical Christians had acquired at the time of the publication of the edict. They had their respective buildings for the celebration of public worship. Their opposition does not seem to have been obviously connected with political intrigues; but we find that they excited, by their variety and numbers, the jealousy of those, who were dignified with the ecclesiastical honours of the empire. All the sects, however, were not indiscriminately exposed to the persecution of the magistrate. The opinions of the Novatians were examined and tolerated. But this sect received, we may presume, the same books of Scripture as their founder adopted in the third century; and it is admitted that Novatian did not reject the sacred canon received in his own times, and

that he does not mention any spurious apocryphal Christian writings.

The manners of the ecclesiastics might be in some degree corrupted by the exuberance of prosperity, and the pursuits of ambition, which opened upon them in the reign of Constantine ; but in what manner the interests of the state could be promoted by the adoption of the supposed old corruptions of the records of their religion, it is difficult to conceive. According to the hypothesis of “ The Diffonance ” we are to suppose, that certain books of the New Testament were either forged or corrupted in the second century ; and that, in this state, a collection of them was received and established when Christianity became the religion of a powerful and extensive empire. But what are the grounds of this bold conjecture ? Constantine himself did not determine, nor authorize others to determine, what books were to be regarded as authentic, and what to be rejected as spurious. This question was not discussed during his reign. Whatever was ascertained respecting this subject had been previously examined by the council of Laodicea. ‘ Not that any other authority is to be attributed to the decision of this assembly, than what may be derived from its antiquity,

and the nature of the enquiry in which that assembly was engaged. It had likewise some advantage in being only a provincial council; a circumstance which, if it subtracts from the universality of the opinion which they pronounced, increases the validity of that opinion by the probability that it was exempt from the influence of secular rulers.

We are required, however, to suppose, that in the latter part of the second century all the copies were corrupted, and the forged books generally dispersed; and that in the time of Constantine the Christians had availed themselves of these corruptions. But would not the Arian controversy have brought to light such a deception as this? Or, without recurring to antiquity, can it be imagined that the author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* overlooked, in his extensive researches into this reign, a fact of such importance, which accorded so well with his purpose of degrading the character of Constantine, and impugning Christianity as an imposture? The wished-for discovery, however, must easily have been made at the time of the Arian controversy, if the imposition had then existed; and it is not a little suspicious, that the author of "*The Dissonance*" should have effected a

discovery, without any intimation or assistance from ancient authors, after an interval of fourteen hundred years, and that he should have suggested corruptions and interpolations, which did not occur to the disputants, nor are recorded by the historians, of that distant period. Nor can we avoid admiring the good fortune, as well as the acuteness, of the inventors and fabricators of these writings, who could at so early a time insert passages, or compose books, that should afterwards be so exactly accommodated to the future interests of Christians, the establishment of whose religious system, as the religion of the state, could not be traced in any events of their own age. If we suppose that the copies of the interpolated and of the forged writings were the same throughout both the eastern and the western empire, to what are we to ascribe this conformity? Was it so ancient as to have acquired no additional authority from the favour and protection of the Emperor? If it were the result of some act of political power, it must, from the extent of its operation, have been noticed, if not preserved, among the memorials of the empire. But we have no record of such transactions; and we are justified in concluding, that no such ever existed.

If this mode of reply should be regarded as unsatisfactory, it must be considered, that it is the only mode which can be employed. When objections relate to periods of time, of which no historical monuments whatever remain, it is easy to invent some answer, deduced from probability, which may satisfy common enquiry, and be applicable to ordinary doubts. But when objections relate to periods of time, of which histories are preserved, and the historians do not speak of events, which are stated in the objections to have occurred, we can only shew, that the objectors assume more than the annals of history furnish, and argue upon supposititious and presumptive data.

We are next to consider the effects of the alledged corruptions upon the Gospel in general. The author of "The Dissonance" affirms, that the present Gospel "is totally unlike the Gospel originally preached by Jesus and his Apostles." This boldly asserted diversity he attempts to establish by an hypothetical comparison of the present and former intelligibility of the intent and purposes of the Gospel, and of the evidences of

its truth. He states it to be indispensable, that ^d“ satisfactory proofs of the truth and
“ divine authority of the Gospel, and a com-
“ plete knowledge of its intents and doctrines,
“ should be really attainable to the ordinary
“ faculties of the human mind, and easy to be
“ comprehended by children, and the most
“ illiterate of the people.” In the first place,
the ordinary faculties of the human mind are
incorrectly opposed “ to children, and the
“ most illiterate of the people;” whose facul-
ties are the ordinary faculties of the species.
The state of intellectual powers not yet ma-
tured, or left uncultivated, cannot be taken
for the standard of the intelligibility or satis-
factory nature of “ proofs of the truth and
“ divine authority of the Gospel, or of its in-
“ tent and purpose,” or of any other book or
system whatsoever. Here however are three
distinct objects to be considered; the Gospel
which was preached, its intent and purpose,
and the proofs of its truth and divine autho-
rity. The Gospel which our Saviour preached
consisted, in its moral part, of purity of thought
and intentions, and universal benevolence; in
its religious system, it inculcated the resur-

^d Diffonance, Pref. p. v.

rection from the dead, a state of future rewards and punishments, an atonement for sin, through the blood of the divine Teacher of these doctrines. Its intent and purpose was represented by the Jews to be, to destroy the law of Moses, instead of being the fulfilment of one dispensation, and the introduction of another. The proofs of its truth and divine authority were, miracles, and the completion of prophecy. In what then, we may ask, did the superior advantage of the unlearned person in the days of our Saviour consist, with regard to the facility of understanding the Gospel, with its intent and its proofs? He understood the language in which it was principally communicated, which now perhaps constitutes a part of the literary research of modern ages. The Gospel itself was intelligible to the poor, or the reply to the Baptist's enquiry, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them," was delusive. The proofs of its truth and divine authority were intelligible to all. The sick were healed instantaneously, the sight of the blind was restored, and devils were cast out. But these were not "satisfactory proofs" to all. The sick, indeed, were healed, but it was upon the sabbath-day; the power of sight was communicated

to a man who was born blind, but it was suspected that he had not been blind from his birth ; devils were cast out, but it was churlishly alledged that it was by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. The fact is, something else is intimated to be wanting to produce conviction besides plenary and intelligible evidence ; besides being contemporaries of our Saviour, hearers of his wisdom, and witnesses of his power. Proofs may be sufficient, although not satisfactory in the event of their influence ; although they do not produce conviction ; because it may be objected at any time, that facts were deficient, as proofs : either that the miracles were not performed at all, or not at a convenient season, or not by the inherent power of the visible agent ; for wherever a doubt can be suggested, or a dispute is intended, objections to the best received truths may be invented ; ingenious, perhaps, but not substantial ; plausible, but visionary ; learned, but irrational and inconclusive. With regard to the full comprehension of the intent of the Gospel, a degree of prejudice prevailed at its first publication, which is no reproach to the revelation itself. It required repeated assurances from our Lord himself to satisfy his followers, that he did not

come to destroy, but to fulfil the law of Moses; and the same prejudices subsisted to a distant period. The circumstance, therefore, of living at the time did not in this respect tend to clear, but rather to obscure, this particular design of the Gospel.

It is not however doubted, that there existed a source of more complete information than could be possessed in succeeding times, and had no reference to the intellectual qualifications of those, to whom it was afforded: this was, the advantage of a personal communication, and in hearing the doctrines promulgated, and in being eye-witnesses of those transactions in which our Lord and his Apostles were concerned. Yet this is likewise independent of the peculiar intelligibility of the revelation itself, and its proofs.

We are further informed, that “ the truth of the Gospel, and the authenticity of the Scriptures which teach it, rest solely upon the plurality of the voices of corrupt and erring men, of no authority from heaven, and supported only by the power of earthly magistrates.” But, upon a review of the

records of the early centuries, it does not appear that the civil magistrate interposed to adapt the testimony of the authenticity of the Scriptures to any object of his own; but the Christians received some as genuine, and rejected others as spurious, upon the proper evidence and examination, without arrogating to themselves any exclusive authority to determine for others, and certainly without the sanction of the civil magistrate. For it is well known, that the canon of the New Testament was formed and established, not merely before the civil magistrate protected Christianity, but during his opposition and hostility. No agreement of a plurality of voices, either pure or corrupt, in a council, so early as the fourth century, determined that the canon of Scripture should consist of such books, and no others. If we seek for this majority of suffrages in the proceedings of the Council of Laodicea, or that of Nice, the result will be in contradiction to the assertions of the author of "The Diffonance." If our accounts on this subject are true, we do not discover that any difference of opinion divided the assembly at Laodicea; so that, for any thing we know, they were unanimous in their decisions. Their

conduct, as far as it is to be collected from history, was candid and unexceptionable. They examined what books were received by the churches in former times, and, as the conclusion of that enquiry, determined which were, or were not, the canonical books. But their catalogue is to be regarded rather as an assurance that the enquiry was duly and carefully conducted, than as an authoritative sanction of a collection of sacred books. And something of weight on this topic ought in reason to be ascribed to the opinion of the council of Laodicea, because they might possess sources of information which are not now in existence. If we refer to the measures of the council of Nice, at which Constantine himself is said to have presided, the question respecting the canon of Scripture was not discussed. It is said to have been attended by an incredible number of ecclesiastics of inferior rank, as well as bishops. Much indeed has been severely, and in general ^fforcibly alledged, against the decisions of these conventions; but it is scarcely to be supposed, that, in such a multitude of various orders of men, no person could be found, whom the affectation of sin-

^f I allude to Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.

gularity, the pride of distinction, or the perverseness of jealousy, might not have led to dissent from the majority of their associates? But where are we informed of the amount of the numbers on each side, which determined the authenticity of the evangelical writings? The independent constitution of the primitive churches had a tendency to leave to the discretion of each society of Christians respectively the reception of such books of Scripture as they had reason to think were genuine, uninfluenced by the superiority of any one church or society in particular. The temporary exclusion of the Apocalypse from the canon evinced caution in the determination of the ancient churches, and proved that they did not rashly admit the books, which had been already placed in the number of those that were genuine, and that they waited till farther enquiry justified their reception of this book under that character, like the rest.

We cannot indeed discover any mode of corrupting the sacred Scriptures, or of establishing the authority of such as are supposed to have been corrupted, that necessarily resulted from the establishment of Christianity as the imperial rule of faith. We are not informed what reasons induced Constantine to

adopt the faith of the majority, nor whether any intrigue was employed to attach him to that party; and no political reason can be assigned why he might not have apostatized after his conversion. We must therefore suppose, that the ordinary motives of conviction operated upon *his* mind as they had done on persons of inferior rank, and as they still operate upon mankind in general. What determined one man to be a heretic, and another to profess orthodoxy, at that time, was probably the same cause which has always produced diversity of opinion, and will continue to produce it, under all modes of government whatsoever.

It is remarked by § Mosheim, in answer to those who would refer the profession of Christianity by Constantine to motives of ambition, that upon attentive reflection, and after a diligent examination of the history of that period, he could not perceive that the profession of the Christian faith either did or could promote the attainment of his wish to reign without a colleague; an object which, he does not deny, he ardently pursued. His government

§ Mosheim de Reb. Christ. ante Const. Magn. p. 969, 970.

was prosperous before he was a Christian, and not a disciple of any religious system whatever.

The ^hheretics of that age were severely treated, and the various edicts against their followers shew that they were numerous and powerful bodies of men, and able in their turn to impose considerable restraint upon the more favoured professors of orthodoxy; and their proceedings continued to excite the jealousy of the prince, and ultimately provoked his coercion. They would assuredly at this time have reproached the orthodox, if there had been any foundation for it, with having substituted a forged and interpolated canon of Scripture instead of the genuine writings, when the sufferings, which the supreme authority inflicted, consisted of the demolition of their places of public worship, and the plunder and destruction of their books. But we do not hear of any complaints of this kind; nor does it appear, that the public reading of the Scriptures was under any restraint, or that any methods were used to prevent the diffusion of the knowledge and information which they contain. This must have taken place, we may

^h See Bingham.

conclude, had the ruling party been conscious that they had by fraud and imposition obtained the sanction of the civil authority for the reception and acknowledgment of forged Scriptures. The very existence of the heretics supposes, that there was in their possession a standard of scriptures of the New Testament, by which the deviations of the orthodox, if any, might have been ascertained.

One of the effects of the corruption of the Gospel is said to be, the alteration of its original character of perspicuity. ⁱ "Its most important, because its fundamental doctrines, are to be interpreted only by the sagacity of the learned respecting the meaning of a few controverted words or sentences of Greek or Hebrew." For this consequence neither the church of Constantine, nor any other church, is responsible; nor do we know how the difficulty would be lessened, if the Gospel had been preserved in any other language than the Greek. The sagacity of the learned would still have been necessary, and perhaps less successful, because it must have been studied under much greater disadvantages. The Gospel indeed, if it had been the

ⁱ Diffonance, Pref. p. v.

intention of Providence, might, and it would, have been written in some other of the tongues, the knowledge of which was imparted to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. But this circumstance would not have obviated objections deduced from the language in which it was composed. The language in which it is written corresponds with the publicity of our Saviour's actions. They were not performed in some obscure and remote district, nor is the language of the Gospel the ancient dialect of some barbarous or illiterate tribe of Asia. It subjected the sacred history and doctrine to the examination of the whole civilized world. We can have the Gospel only in two ways; with or without writing. Would the supposition enhance the credibility of what we of the present day are to receive as the rule of our faith, were we to suppose, that the Gospel might have been communicated and transmitted orally from the first apostolical teacher, who understood the language of the converts by special revelation? As the language in which the Gospel is written was the best understood, the most widely diffused, and prevailed longer in the world than any other, therefore we have better security for the present resemblance of the Gospel to its

prototype, than we otherwise could have had.

Another position of our opponent is, that to understand the doctrines of the Gospel requires critical learning and sagacity ; but this may be applied with more force to any other ancient language. The objection, however, comprizes several particulars ; as, what are to be considered as the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and in what sentences of Greek or Hebrew are they contained ? We are not favoured, however, with any direction to discover what those fundamental doctrines may be which are characterized or alluded to by the author of " The Diffonance," no otherwise than that they are " contained in a few " words or sentences of Greek or Hebrew." Is it meant that we should collect briefly, that the fundamental were the intelligible doctrines ? These doctrines, however, were preached intelligibly to the bulk of mankind by Jesus and his Apostles. But it will not detract from the authority or authenticity of any part of the New Testament to suppose, that those passages, which are now interpreted by the assistance of the critical sagacity of the learned, were the same, that were easily understood by the generality of the hearers who

were at the time addressed by our Saviour and his Apostles. If these passages were not the same, still more sagacity and more critical knowledge would be necessary to establish the difference, or the interpolation. That the contemporaries of the Apostles and Jesus Christ understood many allusions, many parts of the history, the metaphorical language, and other circumstances, more perfectly than we can understand them at present, is no more than what must be said of the readers of the works of all ancient authors : but if the Gospel were to be committed to writing at all, it must necessarily follow, that whatever language was used, it would equally require the study of the learned to deliver correctly the plainer parts, for the instruction of Christians in general, as to support a discussion of the more difficult or less obvious ones with adversaries. Want of intelligibility, however, cannot be alledged candidly against the fundamental doctrines of the Gospels, when it is said solely to consist in the language. The language is not a source of unintelligibility, when that language constitutes a part of the education of every liberal scholar. It is not a mystic language, confined to the priests of our religion ; it is not the hieroglyphic lore of the hierophant. If the

subject indeed has difficulties which perplex the understanding, and which, without some labour, and perhaps after every exertion of the understanding, are not apparently susceptible of explication, the mere words and phraseology, as belonging to the extinct dialect of another country, cannot be adduced as a fair criterion of pristine intelligibility.

The four Gospels were received by the church of Constantine, according to the author of "The Diffonance," ^k "upon the authority of those professed Christians of the second and third centuries, whom they have thought fit to denominate orthodox; and who, rejecting all those numerous evangelical histories, which, Luke informs us, were written in his time, admitted and preserved these four alone, and attributed them to the authors, under whose names they now appear." It is here assumed, without evidence, that the histories, to which St. Luke alludes, were contradictory to his own. It is then argued, that the Christians of the second and third centuries rejected these evangelical histories because they were in opposition to the accounts in the other Gospels. But who has

^k Diffonance, p. 19.

related any of these circumstances, the facts of the histories of which St. Luke speaks, the names of the authors, the names of the professed Christians who adopted or rejected them, in what manner the rejection was agreed upon and declared, or who has preserved the minutest fragment of any one of these “numerous evangelical histories?” The author of “The Diffonance” has himself set the example of interpolation in his own person by audaciously presuming to supply the alledged defects of history by substituting his own unfounded conjectures and assumptions in the place of the records of truth. But it is not easy to conceive how these Christians could admit and preserve four Gospels only, without exposing themselves, not merely to the notice, but to the resentment of those persons, whose sacred books were anterior to that of St. Luke. It is difficult to imagine that a mere stratagem of party, in favour of four spurious narratives, could at once annihilate the credit, or even destroy the existence, of all the other more ancient and more authentic accounts of the same subject; and it is still more difficult to imagine by what means the contents of these lost writings have been so well ascertained, as to justify the affirmation, that they contra-

dicted the accounts contained in the Gospels which we now receive. But as the general preservation of any particular writing is not easily accomplished by interest or favour, so neither is the annihilation of opposite accounts of facts to be effected completely by any means whatever. The process is not altogether mechanical. The instruments are not merely fire and violence, or a combination of a party, or a tribunal of inquisitors. Public opinion is of much too intellectual a nature to be tangible by any of these human contrivances. How could the Christians controul and direct, to their own ends, such a subtle and delicate, but extensive engine as this, in the second and third centuries? Both the orthodox and the heretics respectively preserved copies of their own books, in opposition to the same species of political force; the former in the reign of Diocletian, and the latter under that of Constantine.

The author of "The Diffonance," however, does not wholly attribute the reception of what he considers a fabulous and spurious Gospel to the influence of a great worldly ruler. He is persuaded, that it has been admitted, according to a prediction of St. Paul, that men would believe "a strong delusion,"

because they took “pleasure in unrighteousness.” He has “no doubt” “that the doctrine of Christ’s death being a full satisfaction to the divine justice for all the sins and unrighteousness of men, which is founded principally upon this fabulous and spurious Gospel called Matthew’s, *is particularly alluded to by the Christian prophet in this prediction*; and that this has always been the grand inducement with the members of the orthodox church of Constantine, next to compulsion and temporal allurements of the civil magistrate, to attach them to its fabulous, idolatrous superstition.” The true history is supposed to be that in which are omitted the words “for the remission of sins,” which St. Matthew has recorded in his account of the institution of the last supper. As it has not been my object to discuss the doctrines contained in the several books, the authenticity of which this writer has endeavoured to invalidate, I shall here only observe, that the rejection of the words, “for the remission of sins,” will not be sufficient for the purpose of the objector. For although he wishes to reduce the institution of the last supper to a mere memorial of the former existence of such a person as our Saviour, yet he

retains as genuine other words, which cannot be referred to the notion of a merely commemorative rite. St. Luke, whose narrative is asserted by the objector to be more correct than that of St. Matthew, relates, that our Saviour's words were, " This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." We cannot so far simplify the meaning of this expression as to suppose, that its whole force is employed to signify, that our Saviour shed his blood merely to impress the memory of his death upon the recollection of his disciples. As the final cause of the death of Christ, this explanation will not satisfy any enquirer. The great object of the appearance of our Saviour in the flesh, after the promulgation of the Gospel, was his death; and a very inadequate reason of his death is to be found in the purpose of the perpetuation of his own memory. If the rite simply commemorated the fact, and did not denote its nature and design, the words " my blood, which was shed for you," would express, that the memory of his mere appearance would not have been preserved without this shedding of his blood.

It is remarkable, that this doctrine of atonement is said to have been received by the members of the church of Constantine, upon its

own intrinsic tendency, next to the compulsion and temporal allurements “of the civil magistrature.” Among so many powerful motives it is not easy to discriminate the separate operation of each, and to assign to it the appropriate effect. A doctrine, which is represented as being so favourable to the vicious and immoral propensities of our corrupt nature, could not fail of alluring numerous profelytes. This indeed would deservedly claim a place among the secondary causes in the propagation of Christianity. Temporal allurements and political compulsion were unnecessary, and could not be compared in influence with the agency of the other cause. But the doctrine is represented as acting only in subordination to compulsion and allurements. This indeed is an instance of metaphysical accuracy, which does not perhaps yet belong to the science. The mind is here supposed to be under the influence of various causes, and the order is ascertained in which the energy of each is exercised. This surely furnishes a most extraordinary picture of the state of the Christian community at that period. They are supposed to have been actuated by several interested considerations in receiving one of the fundamental doctrines of their religion; by the dread

of force, by the allurements of temporal compensation, and by the absolute atonement for the sins of the wicked by the death of Christ. For what period are we to suppose that these principles of conduct continued to operate on the minds of men? The delusion is supposed to have been strong, yet it might have been dissipated. It required only the interposition of some innovating enthusiast, or exasperated heretic, to expose to the multitude the instrument of the deception, the forgery of the book from which the doctrine of the atonement was first divulged. This could have been attempted at any time; for we can see no moral or political obstacle to prevent the disclosure of such an imposture, if such an imposture had existed. The same spirit, which reformed the western churches in subsequent ages, would have burst forth and have undeceived that of Constantine. But the church of Constantine did not prevent any of its members from applying the same test for the general authenticity of the books of the New Testament that the author of "The Diffonance" has employed. The Gospel of St. Luke was as open to their examination, as it has been since to his. They might have assumed it as the standard of the truth of the other narratives, or, from

the frequent perusal of it, they might have observed that discrepancy with the other Gospels, which might have led to a similar conclusion of want of accuracy in the rest. But of such proceedings there is not the slightest intimation any where. It is indeed acknowledged by the objector, that his own standard is not without imperfections. The interpolators, he thinks, have altered some portions; so that the rule, by which we are to ascertain the correspondence or variation of the thing to be examined, is itself correct only to a certain degree. The interpolations indeed are said to be “not difficult to be distinguished by an accurate attentive reader;” but the characteristic of a rule is not, that it has deviations easily discernible, and that it is straight in general; but this, that it shall be capable of shewing the equality or inequality in every part of that to which it is applied. By this acknowledgment, we are justified in rejecting an appeal to such an imperfect and inadequate test of truth or falsehood.

In commendation, however, of the Gospel of St. Luke, and as a reason for preferring it to that of St. Matthew, it is said, that “St. Luke wrote his histories in the language in which we have received them;” but that

St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic, and we have received it in Greek. Without adverting to the obscurity respecting the nature and existence of the Syro-Chaldaic original of St. Matthew's Gospel, it is assumed, that the Greek is a translation, and that ¹ "a critical attention to the language of the writing itself, compared with that of Luke's histories, shews that it is not a translation from any uniform original;" that "it was written long after Luke's second history;" that it was of later date than the "history of Josephus;" that the author "was not an Apostle;" that "his ignorance of the geography of Palestine, and of the customs of the Hebrew people," shew "he was not a Jew; and that he did not understand the prophecies of the Jewish Scripture." Of these particulars we shall here consider two only. That there is a difference in the style of St. Luke from that of the other Evangelists, has been too often remarked to leave a doubt, that the critics have not been mistaken. But to affirm that this difference of style shall denote the difference, in these instances, of the age of the respective writers

¹ Diffonance, p. 41.

with great, or indeed with any approximation to exactness, is to assign to it the property of a criterion, which it does not possess. When we speak of the pure writers of antiquity, then we may appeal to this standard; but when we are considering the compositions of authors in a language not indigenous, a difference not only in the general education of the persons, but merely the difference of place where they acquired the language in which they wrote, was sufficient to produce a variation in their style, which might be mistaken for the characteristics of different ages in which the writers are said to have lived.

We are next to remark, that the very omissions of St. Luke are assumed as decisive of the propriety and authenticity of what is inserted in St. Matthew. This is an unwarranted application of the standard of the truth of history. It is used likewise by this management to determine, not merely what portions are omitted, but to ascertain the reason why they have been omitted by the other writer. Such is the exemplification of the licentious ~~and irregular~~ use of a rule, assumed under the pretence, and indeed with an ostentation, of accuracy; and such are the consequences of abandoning the usual kinds of evidence, and

inventing modes of investigation, which could not perhaps, even to the author, seem to promise results of greater certainty. A question however occurs in this place, with what degree of innocence can this be done? The enquiry after truth is laudable: and we are not affirming that there is guilt in searching for it, where others have not preceded us; but in searching for it by means which are known not to be adapted for its discovery. The profession of the love of truth has been repeated by polemics till it produces weariness and reasonable distrust, because it has too often proceeded from the lips of those who have previously perverted the necessary evidence, or who have directed others to search for it in sources, which they knew would be explored in vain.

SERMON VIII.

ACTS xxi. 37.

And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

^a **I**N considering the question of the authenticity and genuineness of the evangelical writings, the language in which they are written claims our attention, not merely as a subject of curious research, but also as it comprehends the enquiry, whether any of them, in the form

^a The reader is desired to observe, that the “Herculanea” were not published when this discourse was finished; and no facts have since been inserted from that work. The whole assistance which I have received in the composition of this discourse has been derived from the “Appendix” to “Observations on the Words of the Centurion uttered at the Crucifixion of our Lord, by a Layman; Oxford printed, 1809:” and I have acknowledged it, as the occasions occur. For the rest of the facts, their discovery, their disposition, and their application, I am to receive, without participation, censure or praise.

in which we have received them, are versions from another tongue; and whether the first introduction of Latin terms can be so ascertained as to form an argument to prove a spurious original, when they are found in writings of a particular date. The author of "The Diffonance" has declared, that "this single circumstance of the language," the mixture of Latin words, induces him to "suspect every passage and writing, wherein it is found, to be either an interpolation or fiction of no earlier date than the middle of the second century; and, if corroborated by other circumstances of inconsistency or great improbability, to afford a full conviction of their spuriousness, and want of apostolic authenticity^b." The most complete mode of refuting this objection seemed to be, that of giving an historical sketch of the diffusion of the knowledge of the Greek language among various nations in general, or among such as were connected with the Romans by subjugation or alliance; although a shorter, yet sufficient answer, might be found in the consideration, that in the books of the Evangelists, and the apostle Paul, we have instances of the

^b Diffonance, p. 53.

current colloquial phraseology of the country, which we cannot expect should be exemplified or repeated in authors, whose business it was to record other events, in which other subjects, and persons of a different and higher class, were concerned.

It is some presumption in favour of the authenticity of a revelation, when it is communicated in the language which is most general, and best understood, in those places where it is the object and business of the agents to diffuse a knowledge of that revelation. To promulgate it originally through the means of a translation would be a suspicious introduction of a new religious system. A version removes the original too far from general examination, and interposes a veil, which obstructs and limits the enquiry to which a recent revelation should be unreservedly exposed. We must contend for the presence of every circumstance which could facilitate investigation, and extend to all, the knowledge of the subject revealed, and which would leave the judgment undisturbed with any suspicion of a fraudulent interpretation of the original.

It is said to be ascertained by sufficient testimony, that the Gospel of St. Matthew was originally composed in the Hebrew language

of that period. As we have no remains of this work in that language, it is argued, that ^c“ the eastern Jews, and the many thousands of Jewish Christians who fled to Pella, and also the Nazarenes,” would require a Gospel in their own language, because they did not understand Greek^d. If this reasoning be admitted to prove a necessity for the composition of a Gospel in the Syro-Chaldaic or Hebrew language, it ought likewise to be admitted to prove, that such a Gospel would have been necessarily preserved among the members of so considerable a community. The question is not, whether any inspired writing is lost; nor do we insist upon the inspiration as a pledge of the interference of the Almighty to preserve it. We rather enquire, whether a book ever existed which was purposely designed for so large a number of converts, and which, if it existed, must have been lost by the intervention of such causes only as, we might presume, would have affected the condition of the people in such a manner, as would have

^c Michaelis, vol. iii. part i. p. 115.

^d Michaelis, vol. iii. part i. p. 143. “ Dr. Marsh indeed has brought nine arguments to prove, that the Jews, even at Jerusalem, universally understood Greek; but they really are of no value whatever.”

attracted the attention of the historian. But we learn also from historical evidence, that the Greek Gospel of St. Matthew was early known, so that the period, during which the use of the Hebrew Gospel subsisted, if it ever subsisted exclusively of the other, must have been so short, as almost to have made it unnecessary to compose such a work. We might ask, how a Greek translation became necessary at all, but particularly so soon after the publication of the Hebrew original. Who were the persons that required St. Matthew's Gospel to be published in the Greek language, rather than the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke? Against these hypothetical arguments the testimony of Papias will perhaps be adduced as decisive. This testimony it is not my intention to weaken by any attempt to depreciate the understanding and abilities of the witness, because a very small portion of either was sufficient to qualify him for this very simple effort. He says, that "each person interpreted the Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew as he was able." These words seem to describe the state of the knowledge of the Hebrew language at that time; but in what place, and among what persons, is not specified. If however St. Matthew wrote, as it is

related upon as good authority, for Jews, who understood Hebrew only, what necessity was there for the interpretation of which Papias speaks? There certainly are difficulties in the evidence of Papias; but we are not justified in explaining away, or in rejecting that evidence. He had not seen the book itself, although he was an ancient writer; nor was he informed, although he was particularly assiduous in collecting information on subjects of this nature, in what place it was to be found. And yet his ^e distance from the time of the appearance of the Hebrew Gospel needed not to have precluded him from knowing these circumstances from the same persons who related the others. The simple explanation of the words of Papias certainly justifies the reader in concluding, that the Hebrew language was not well understood by the persons who used the Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's Gospel; and those persons could not be, on the other hand, Jews, who understood the Greek language only. It is not usual to represent as a remarkable occurrence, that a certain body of people were able to comprehend the meaning of a book which was written in their native language;

^e He was a disciple of St. John.

but it certainly is a curious fact, that they understood it so imperfectly as the expression implies. But whatever theory the testimony of Papias may contradict, we must nevertheless retain it. The Jews of Jerusalem, it has been asserted, did not understand Greek. But these persons might, from their situation and connections, have been supposed to be almost necessarily acquainted with the Greek language; and this not as a part of a learned, or even an ordinary education, but from the necessity there was for its employment in the usual intercourse of life, and from their connection with Greeks and even with Romans. The annual resort of Jews to the metropolis from the countries where the Greek tongue was the vernacular language, was alone sufficient to induce, if not to oblige them, to attain in early age this additional medium of communication. The text indeed shews, that ^f“ when St. Paul spake in public before the Jews in Jerusalem, he addressed them in Hebrew.” But he used the Hebrew with an obvious intention, and for the same reason that he used Greek in addressing the captain of the band, who was

^f Michaelis, vol. iv. p. 215.

surprised at it, and immediately enquired, “Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?” It is assumed that St. Paul was, at this time, known to the body of the people; but it is evident, from the words of a subsequent passage, that they were acquainted with him only as he had been represented by the Asiatic Jews, as “the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and the temple;” and that “he had brought Greeks into the temple, and had polluted that holy place.” St. Paul had conciliated the courtesy of the Roman officer by speaking Greek, and obtained permission to address the people, whose violence he thought he could restrain till he had explained the history of his life, and the particular actions of which he was accused. Nothing therefore could more suddenly excite their curiosity, and present a motive for attention, than the contrast of their accusation with the language of his defence; which, otherwise, might have been lost in clamour at its commencement, and he might not have had the opportunity of saying, “I am verily a man which am a Jew.” St. Paul therefore

spoke in Hebrew to obviate this part of the accusation, and to shew that he was a Jew, and not a Greek, and had no inducement to pollute the temple by introducing into it Greeks, or other strangers.

There can be no other reason for an anxious and minute investigation of the fact, whether any book, or part of Scripture, be a translation, but that it is connected with the enquiry, whether or not, on that account, it can be regarded as divinely inspired. This very address of St. Paul was in the Hebrew tongue; but it is transmitted to us in Greek only. Now we must have it either from St. Paul himself, or from St. Luke. In the first case, there must have been two originals; and in the other, we are not ignorant who was the translator. In considering the question of the inspiration of a translated work, it seems necessary that the translator should be known, and that an original should be found to have existed, or to have been used among those persons where it was first published. It is not intended to deny the claim of inspiration to any work merely because it is a version. If it is correct to explain, according to this notion, the interpretation of tongues, this was no less a spiritual gift to the apostolical teachers

than the power of speaking the tongues which were interpreted ; and then the only question that remains is, whether an oral had better pretensions to inspiration than a written version. This power of interpretation would not merely facilitate, but ensure the correctness of such a version. We might after all expect, that the same tradition, by which the Gospel itself is ascribed to St. Matthew, would also inform us who was the translator. But it is not necessary to pursue these conjectures. It may be more useful to trace an outline of the history of the diffusion of the Greek language among the inhabitants of those countries who resorted to Jerusalem, and witnessed the sudden communication of their respective dialects or languages to the uninstructed Galileans. It may perhaps in this view be regarded as an illustrative comment upon this part of the Acts of the Apostles.

We may first examine, to what degree the Greek language was cultivated, not merely “ in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about “ Cyrene,” but in the northern region of Africa in general. One of the most remarkable effects of the settlement of the Greeks in Africa, after the conquests of Alexander, was the version of the sacred books of the Jews.

We may deduce useful conclusions from either side of the disputed history of this version. If the second Ptolemy applied to the Jewish Sanhedrim for translators, then the Jews of Jerusalem understood the language of Greece more than two centuries and a half before the age of our Saviour. And what causes, we might ask, had operated so as to make them lose what they had once possessed in so eminent a manner? If, again, it were the work of the Alexandrine Jews, we see at what a remote period the people of that nation, and in this country, were qualified to use the Greek language for every purpose. If we continue our progress southwards, we discover, not far from the coast of the Erythrean sea, the sovereign of a considerable tract skilled in the language of Greece; not perhaps the remains of the literature of the age of the Ptolemies, but the effects of the commerce of the adjacent sea. The comparatively recent inscription at Axum marks the public use of the same language, and its continuance probably in the same district to the beginning of the fourth century. If we return to the northern shores, we are reminded, that although the Carthaginians, who were jealous of exposing their government or their commerce to the enquiry

of foreigners, had with this view interdicted the acquisition of the Greek learning; yet they did not enforce the law. Hannibal was acquainted with it not only as a foldier, but is faid to have compofed feveral historical works in that language, and was attended in his expeditions by a native of Lacedæmon. Indeed their frequent wars in Sicily would have obliged their commanders to neglect the edict made at Carthage, if they meant to qualify themfelves to conduct their military affairs with fuccefs. The Greeks of Lacedæmon, of Corinth, and of Italy, were required to affift their ſuppreſſed countrymen in the Sicilian colonies, which were ſubject to the Carthaginians. What would the law above alluded to avail againſt the probable effects of a hoſtile or a pacific intercourſe of their armies with the Greek inhabitants of their foreign poſſeſſions? At a later period the younger Micipſa invited to his court learned Greeks, paſſed his time in their ſociety, and ſtudied their philoſophy. Nor ſhould we omit the name of Juba, who, during his reſidence at Rome, acquired ſo much knowledge of the Greek learning, and indeed of general literature, that he

did not obtain more distinction^h from his empire of Mauritania as a sovereign, than from his liberal erudition as a scholar.

If we pass from “the parts of Libya” to “the dwellers in Asia,” it will not be necessary to prove formally, that the Greek colonies in Asia Minor preserved the language of the mother country, or that Phrygia and Pamphylia, which must have had so much intercourse with them, were not ignorant of it. It is expressly related of the celebrated ⁱPrince of Pontus, that he studied the Greek philosophy; and, in the age of Tiberius, the ^kCapadocian geographer did not exclude his countrymen, we may suppose, from the perusal of his writings, by his use of the Greek language. On the conquest of the more eastern parts of Asia by Alexander, the poetry of Homer was commonly recited; (or, if I may be permitted to use the stronger expressions of ^lPlutarch, “Ὅμηρος ἦν ἀνάγνωσμα”) and the youth of Persia, Susiana, and Gedrosia, rehearsed in public the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides^m. But,

^h Plin. Nat. Hist.

ⁱ Appian. de B. Mithrid. p. 815. ed. Schweigh.

^k Strabo.

^l De Fort. et Virt. Alex. p. 385. ed. Steph.

^m Plut. *ibid*.

prior to the time of the conquests of Alexander, the Greek language was not merely known, but used in the east for public purposes and occasions. The inscription on the tomb of Cyrus at Passagardæ was written both in the Greek and Persian tongues. But Darius had settled a colony of Greeks from Miletus near the extremity of the Persian gulph. The generals of Alexander might make the use of the Greek language more popular, and more necessary through their respective sovereignties; and the foundation of Seleucia on the Tigris spread the language among "the dwellers in Mesopotamia." We are not to conclude that all the knowledge of this language in these parts of the world is to be ascribed to the influence of the Macedonian conquests. We are informed, upon the authority of Aristotle himself, cited by ^a Josephus, that he met with a learned Jew of Cœle-

^a Joseph. cont. Apion. lib. i. p. 1347.

"There I met a Jew by birth from Cœle-Syria. These
 "are descendants of the philosophers of India; and are
 "called among the Indian philosophers Calani, but among
 "the Syrians Jews, from the name of their country,
 "which is termed Judæa. But the name of their city
 "is very uncouth, for they call it Jerusalem. This man
 "then, who had travelled much, and was going down
 "from the countries of Upper Asia to the maritime

Syria who had cultivated the philosophy of the Greeks with so much ardour, that he was, as he is described, °“ an Hellenic, not in his “ language only, but in his soul also.” The cities on the Euxine sea were Greek colonies, founded long before the age of Alexander.

“ coasts, was a Greek, not only in his dialect, but in his “ soul also. And during our stay in Asia Minor, hap-
“ pening to arrive where we were, he joined us, and some
“ other scholars, in order to make trial of our wisdom;
“ and, when we had conversed on many topics of litera-
“ ture, *he communicated rather more information than he*
“ *received.* These circumstances Aristotle mentioned to
“ Clearchus,” [his pupil, and inferior to none of the Peri-
patetics,] “ and moreover detailed the great and wonderful
“ temperance of the Jew in his diet and sobriety.” This
reference I owe to “ The Inspector,” a work written by
a most learned and excellent man, and my own and my
father’s friend, the Rev. Dr. Hales of Killisandra, for-
merly of Trinity College, Dublin. The Established Church
has been greatly indebted of late to the erudition and
ability of Irish scholars. I wish they would increase the
effect of their exertions by more candour in their treat-
ment of each other as authors.

° Plutarch, Vit. Craffi. I am indebted for this im-
portant reference to the “ Appendix” to “ Observations
“ on the Words of the Centurion uttered at the Cruci-
“ fixation of our Lord.” “ In confirmation of this we
“ learn from Plutarch, that it was well understood at
“ the courts both of Parthia and of Armenia. Orodes
“ the Parthian, and Artuafdes the Armenian monarch,
“ were both of them skilled in the Greek language and

If we survey the nations adjacent to Mesopotamia, we find that, in the time of Crassus, Orodes the Parthian king was well versed in the Greek language and Greek learning, and that Artuafdes the king of Armenia, his contemporary, composed tragedies, orations, and histories in that language, some of which are said by Plutarch to have been extant in his time. The same author relates also, that a part of the festivities in celebration of the nuptials between the son of Orodes and the daughter of Artuafdes, consisted of the recitation and scenic exhibition of some of the Greek dramatic compositions. While a distinguished Lydian actor was rehearsing a part of the *Bacchæ* of Euripides, a messenger entered, and laid the head of Crassus, recently

“ the Greek literature ; and the latter composed tragedies, discourses, and histories in Greek, some of which
“ were extant in the time of Plutarch. A remarkable
“ circumstance to this purpose is related by the writer
“ last mentioned, that, at the instant when the news of
“ the defeat and death of Crassus was brought to the
“ court of Parthia, they were engaged in the performance of dramatic pieces in the Greek language, and
“ particularly of the *Bacchæ* of Euripides, in the acting
“ of which they employed the head of Crassus as if it had
“ been that of Pentheus, murdered by his mother Agave.” Page 27.

flain, at the feet of Orodes. The actor instantly applied the occurrence; and, assuming the character of Agave, bore upon a thyrsus the head of Crassus, as if it were that of Pentheus, and repeated the appropriate passages of the Greek tragedian. The spectators, it is said, applauded the address of the actor, and felt the happy adaptation of the fiction to the reality. Nor should it be omitted that Surenna, the general of Orodes, in order to expose the corrupt manners of the Romans, and the subject of their thoughts, even at a time when they were opposed to an enemy in the field, expressly assembled the senate of Seleucia, and produced for their indignant inspection the licentious volumes of the Milesiads of Aristides, which had been found among the plunder in the military baggage of a Roman officer of rank.

We are now to pass to the “strangers of Rome,” and to examine cursorily the state of the Greek language in Italy. It is certain

P Plut. in Vit. Crass. Ovid querulously remarks, that, although Aristides had written licentiously, yet he was not exiled.

Junxit Aristides Milesia crimina secum,
Pulsus Aristides nec tamen urbe sua.

Trist. ii. 413.

that Italy received many colonies from Greece ; but whether after the destruction of Troy, it is not necessary to discuss. The tract of country denominated Magna Græcia was not the only part which was occupied by these foreign adventurers. The coast of Etruria was originally peopled by migrations from Greece, and its Asiatic colonies. Soon after the establishment of a regular system of polity among the Romans, the compilation of the laws of the twelve tables shews the frequency as well as the facility of their intercourse with Greece, which might perhaps have originated among the mixed races of the inhabitants of Rome itself. We are not to conclude that the use of the Greek language was not introduced before the introduction of the Grecian philosophy. There were other causes, which had led to the acquisition of this language before the state of society had prepared the Romans for adopting or engaging in philosophical Grecian speculations. The ambassador of Pyrrhus addressed the Roman senate in the Greek language three centuries before the Christian æra. It appears that Fabricius, who was deputed to confer with Pyrrhus and Cineas, understood this language sufficiently for every public purpose. At his interview with Pyrrhus, Cineas

shocked the simplicity and purity of character of the Roman consul by his avowal of the corrupt doctrines of the Epicurean system. Cineas directed the conversation to the character of Epicurus, and informed Fabricius, "that the Epicureans placed the chief end
 "and happiness of man in pleasure; that they
 "avoided all offices and employments in the
 "state, as so many obstacles to that happiness;
 "that they attributed to the supreme Being
 "neither love nor hate, maintaining that he
 "was perfectly regardless of men and all human affairs, and confined himself to an inactive life, where he spent whole ages in the
 "full enjoyment of all kinds of pleasure." The minister of Pyrrhus found the stern Roman acquainted with the language, but not with the enervating philosophy of the Greeks. "May Pyrrhus and the Tarentines," exclaimed Fabricius, "maintain these doctrines as long as they are at war with the Romans!" There is a remarkable contrast between the two representations which introduced Fabricius and the censor Cato to the knowledge of the tenets of some of the most eminent Grecian philosophers. When Tarentum was taken by Fabius Maximus, Cato, then young, lived with Nearchus, a Pythagorean. He desired

to hear the nature “ of his philosophy, and,
“ finding his reflections the same with Plato’s,
“ that pleasure is the greatest allurements to
“ evil ; that the greatest plague and calamity
“ of the soul is the body, from which it can-
“ not disengage and free itself in this world
“ but by such thoughts and reasonings as
“ wean and separate it from all corporeal pas-
“ sions and affections; he was so much pleased
“ with this discourse, that he was still more
“ determined to adhere to frugality and tem-
“ perance.” These sentiments might have in-
duced a Roman of this period to cultivate the
language for the sake of such philosophy. In
the time of Marcus Marcellus the Romans had
adopted the polished manners of the Greeks :
and he himself admired so much the Grecian
learning and eloquence, that he “ honoured
“ all that excelled in them ; but he himself
“ did not make a progress equal to his desires,
“ because his other business and employment
“ took him off from a close application.”
Cato, however, evidently made a distinction
between the language and the philosophy of
Greece : for he perused the writings of the
most eminent Greek authors, “ among whom

“ he received some advantage from Thucydides, but much more from Demosthenes, “ towards forming his style and improving his “ eloquence.” When he was at Athens as a Roman ambassador, he spoke to the people “ through an interpreter; not that he was unable to speak to them in their own tongue; “ but his intention was, to maintain the dignity of the Roman language.” When Cato was old, Carneades the academic, and Diogenes the stoic, came from Athens on an embassy to Rome. This occurrence formed an æra, not so much in the study of the Greek language, as of the study of the Grecian philosophy in that city. The invectives of Cato were not indiscriminate. He censured the tenets of the philosophers, and directed his indignant remonstrances against Carneades, who adorned the precepts of philosophy with all the graces of eloquence, and attracted the Roman youth from their martial sports to

It is added, “ and ridicule those who admired nothing but what was Greek.” This was not, and could not be his intention. He was required to sustain the dignity of the people who had deputed him their ambassador; and the use of their language was a point of ceremony, an assumption of official state, and an expression of political independence.

listen to the delusive oratory of the Athenian masters of wisdom. It was at this period that he predicted the evils which would arise from the admiration of the Greek learning and of the Greek philosophy, which would produce the decline of the ancient Roman character. Even at the close of life, when the use of the Greek language was separated from the Greek philosophy, he prophetically characterized, in the language of Homer, the greatness of the younger Scipio. The subsequent detail would occupy too much time if it were pursued through similar instances minutely. It may be sufficient to state briefly, that Augustus addressed the inhabitants of Alexandria in a Greek oration, when he explained the reason of the pardon which he had granted, after they had espoused the cause of Mark Antony; and he is said to have spoken in Greek ^s “ in order that he might be understood:” that “ Molo the rhetorician, a contemporary of “ Cicero, declaimed ^t in the senate in Greek;

^s. Καὶ τότε λόγον, δι' οὗ συνέγνω σφίσιν, Ἑλληνισί, ὅπως συν-
ῶσιν αὐτοῦ, εἶπε. D. Cass. lib. li. p. 454.

^t See the Appendix before referred to for these examples of Molo, Tiberius, and the previous study of Greek, recorded by Quintilian. This is the use, to its full extent, which I have made of the Appendix.

“ and Tiberius Cæſar examined witneſſes, and
 “ heard pleadings and arguments in Greek, in
 “ cauſes that came before that aſſembly;”
 that it was the language of both ſocial and
 public intercourſe at Rome with ambaffadors
 and all foreigners; that “ it was uſual to in-
 “ ſtruct the youth in Greek before they com-
 “ menced the ſtudy of Latin.” We may add,
 that if we paſs the borders of Italy, we find
 it among the ^u Helvetii, who regiſtered their
 population in the Greek language.

With reſpect to the ſurpriſe of the dwellers
 in Judæa, when they heard the Galileans
 ſpeak in the tongue wherein they were born,
 we do not perhaps underſtand how it was
 occaſioned. We ſhould imagine, that a Jew
 of Paleſtine ſpeaking in the Hebrew or Syro-
 Chaldee could not be regarded as a miraculous
 fact by a Jew of the ſame country. Even if
 the Galileans had been peculiarly illiterate,
 they muſt have underſtood enough of the lan-

^u Cæſar. Comment. lib. i. c. 18. It has been remark-
 ed, that the words *Græcis litteris* may imply only Greek
 characters; but I am diſpoſed to think that we ſhall not
 be able to find any other inſtance, if this be one, of the
 uſe of the Greek characters exiſting independently of a
 knowledge of the language. See a note at the end of
 the volume.

guage in which they carried on their various occupations ; but how could their original ignorance in this respect be so well known as to make their facility of expressing themselves at this time appear to be miraculous ? This, we may presume, was not the meaning of the historian. The majority of the Jews who resorted to Jerusalem probably used the Greek language in some of the various dialects of the countries where they resided. If we suppose that the Apostles spoke every variety of language which was strictly indigenous in the several quarters of the world, of which the hearers were respectively natives, it is somewhat remarkable that gospels were not composed in some of these tongues for the use of these proselytes. The period from the communication of the gift of tongues, to the composition of the Gospels, was not of sufficient duration to allow the acquisition of the Greek language so generally among distant nations. Nor indeed had they any other motive to acquire it, than to qualify themselves to understand a gospel which had been at first promulgated orally in their native tongue, and was committed to writing in another. It may be remarked, that, throughout the whole tract of the apostolical missions, although a native lan-

guage must be supposed to maintain its place and use, yet we also know that the Greek was superadded to the vernacular tongue throughout the same countries, and more commonly acquired and employed than any modern language that can be named, which has been ever attained for the purpose of foreign communication.

To the preceding detail it may be objected, that it has been proved only that it formed a medium of intercourse among the more cultivated and intelligent, and not among that description of persons to whom the Gospel was to be preached. There are causes adequate to account for a still more general diffusion of the Greek language than we can at present prove to have prevailed from existing histories. It was the language in which the commerce of the ancient world was carried on : if we add to this the dispersion of numerous colonies of Greeks in Asia Minor, Italy, and Sicily ; and the effects of the conquests of Alexander ; we shall find the language establishing itself by the influence of fashion, by the progress of the Greek philosophy, and by the most powerful motives of human action, the interests of nations and individuals.

If it be an accurate observation, that the

Greek language of the New Testament contains a mixture of oriental idioms, it might be expected that such foreign additions would be incorporated with the Greek of Palestine. But this state of the language shews, that it had not acquired such modes of phraseology on a sudden; but that the Greek had been long enough in use in Palestine, or elsewhere, to be tinged with the peculiarities of the native tongues of those who adopted it. The language of Lycaonia was only a dialect of the Greek. At what period certain Latin words began to be introduced into the Greek, it may not be possible to ascertain; particularly the names of things, which were not common in the usages or habits of Greece and Italy. This would prevent the mention of any thing which was not previously known to those who inhabited the countries in which Greek and Latin were the vernacular tongues, as no word in use could be found that would express the meaning. * Tiberius, we are informed; when he enacted a law, forbade the insertion of the word describing the object of the decree, as being a Greek term, although it could not be

* D. Cass. lib. lvii. p. 612. Dr. Townson, I afterwards saw, had cited the same fact from another author, Suetonius; and for a different purpose.

adequately expressed by any word in the Latin language. Are we not then to expect to find such words as *σεδάγια* and *σιμινίδια* where the manners and habits of the people did not furnish the things themselves? And yet it is upon the authority of these, and similar words, that we are to pronounce to be forgeries any books which contain them before the time of Trajan. This is an unreasonable standard of authenticity, because it supposes that every word was first used in writing before it was employed in conversation and general intercourse. It may happen that terms of this kind are not to be found elsewhere; when at the same time we know, from the nature of the objects which they represent, that they must have been used from the period of the invention or adoption of the things themselves. Besides, it may not fall within the view of a writer to mention facts relative to such objects; and still less can we determine that they were never described, or their use noticed before, so that the word might remain confined to colloquial use because the occasions of employing it otherwise might seldom occur; or again we must suppose, that we possess all the writings in which it had ever been introduced.

By this view of the extensive diffusion of the Greek language we shall be able to judge of an observation respecting the language in which the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. It is remarked, that y “if this Epistle had been sent to Parthian Jews, who became converts to Christianity, the Hebrew original would hardly have been lost; for in the countries which bordered upon the Euphrates the Christian religion was propagated at a very early period.” But I have before shewn, that at the time of Crassus the Greek language was well understood in Parthia; nor are we to limit the use of the Septuagint version of the Jewish Scriptures to the country where it was executed. If the early establishment of Christianity in the countries near the Euphrates were a reason why any Hebrew writing should be preserved, the same cause should have operated still more powerfully in the preservation of the Hebrew original of St. Matthew’s Gospel in Judea and Jerusalem, where Christianity was first promulgated.

It is an assertion not well supported, that “the greatest part of the inhabitants of Jeru-

“salem were certainly not acquainted with “Greek.” This is contradicted by every argument even from probability. The metropolis of the country, to which persons of the same unmixed descent resorted annually in great multitudes to attend their common religious festivals from almost every part of the world, would present opportunities of a more complete communication than could be afforded by any other place in the same country. It was not an intercourse between Jews and strangers, but each stranger recognised the other as a member of the same great family; and therefore the usual causes which create distrust, reserve, and jealousy, and a disinclination to converse with foreigners, would here have no place. It is said farther, that even the ^zJews themselves called the Greek the vernacular tongue, and acknowledged it in this character almost in Judea itself. ^aJosephus composed his work on the wars of his countrymen in Hebrew, which is now lost; but the Greek version of it is preserved. He has however informed us, that he himself translated it, and that he studied the Greek

^z Rumpæus, p. 93.

^a In Præfat. ad lib. de Bell. Jud.

language at Rome in order to qualify himself to write with more correctness, as we may suppose; not that he acquired it there from its very elements. He designed his version for the use of the Romans as well as the Greeks; and, as he learnt the Greek language at Rome, he had the choice of the two languages, but certainly did not prefer that which was least known: and he could have no interest to write an account of the wars of his countrymen more intelligibly for the use of the Greeks, than for that of the Romans.

I am not sensible that this enquiry into the general prevalence of the Greek language is defective in the proof of an important circumstance; namely, that it was so generally spoken, that the Gospels, when written in that tongue, would be easily understood by persons of almost every condition. It would otherwise have seemed to be repugnant to propriety, to the apostolical practice and directions, and to the design of the Author of Christianity, that the Gospel should be preached in the native language of each people, but published in writing in a language known to one nation only. On the other hand, the extent of its diffusion, or the length of time during which it continued in use,

would not prevent the introduction of versions, wherever they were necessary. But it is worthy of remark, that the language of the originals was so well understood at that time, that it was a security for a faithful interpretation; that one party was able to execute such a work, and another to exercise a controul, which might lead to the knowledge of the true meaning of Scripture, and tend to preserve its integrity.

We do not insist upon the adoption of the Greek language as a suggestion of inspiration. It was necessary to use it even if the writers had acted only in conformity with prudence and duty, as it was their object to diffuse Christianity as widely as possible among the nations of the world. It has been remarked indeed, that ^b“the supposition that God has chosen in his wisdom the Greek language as a vehicle of revelation, because it was at that time the language most generally known, will not prove the divinity of the revelation.” We do not connect the divinity of a revelation with the language in which it is communicated, so as to deduce a proof of its divine origin from the universality of the language. But we may be allowed to

^a Michaelis, vol. i. p. 99.

admire the concurrence of this fact with the time and season fixed by Providence for the promulgation of the Gospel to the world. It heightened the publicity of the revelation by enlarging the field of examination, and *immediately* subjected a religion, whose essential characteristic was, its adaptation to all persons, to the curious scrutiny of a larger portion of mankind, and indeed to the whole civilized world, which would not have taken place had it been conveyed in a language used by any other of the communities of the earth. “No language,” it is said, “is so widely extended as to be understood by a tenth part of the inhabitants of the globe.” When the Gospel was first preached, and afterwards published in writing, the Greek language had acquired an ascendancy which was not divided with any other. The question is, to what extent is the language known in which a certain revelation is first communicated. The facility of such an examination, at the first appearance of a divine revelation, will determine its pretensions to credibility. It is in vain to urge that “a language may cease to be a living language in a thousand years.” A much smaller period would suffice for every

purpose of examination, and for the execution of exact versions of the alledged revelation. The language should indeed afford as large a sphere as possible for the examination of the facts and documents on their first appearance and publication, and the Greek above all other languages afforded the opportunity of extensive investigation. It might have seemed, according to a paradoxical foreigner, "not unworthy the wisdom of Providence to have chosen the Latin language as the medium of revelation." Christianity did not require, but sought greater means of publicity. A language comparatively little known could not have been selected consistently with the comprehensive design of infinite wisdom, or with the Gospel, the character of which is, that nothing was taught or done in secret. If we adopt the trite citation from Cicero respecting the language of his country, compared with the Greek by the standard of extensive use, we shall find, that the former would have been a defective instrument for spreading a knowledge of the Gospel, because it would have limited that indispensable search and enquiry, to which every recent revelation should be fully submitted, while the latter corresponds with almost a providential preci-

fion with the commands of the Author of Christianity to his disciples, “to go and teach
“all nations;” ^d“Græca leguntur in omni-
“bus fere gentibus; Latina suis finibus, exi-
“guis sane, continentur.”

I have thus brought the proposed discussion to its destined close. I have avoided any recapitulation of the topics and reasoning, because it might appear rather as an obtrusive display of research, than as necessary to the elucidation of the general argument; because, too, the disputant seems to award to himself the advantage in the controversy; and, lastly, because I remember that there are limits to the indulgence of the most candid. I cannot characterize the spirit of “The Diffonance” in more accurate terms, nor conclude with a more just reprehension of *the private and public conduct of those, who insidiously endeavour to invalidate the best evidence of which the thing in question of any kind is susceptible*, than is contained in the practical and admonitory dogma of the Council of Chalcedon; “Qui
“post semel inventam veritatem aliud quærit,
“mendacium quærit, non veritatem.”

^d Cic. pro Arch. Poet.

He who, after truth is once discovered, is seeking something else, seeks falsehood, not truth.

THE
PROBATIONARY
DISCOURSE,
PREACHED
NOVEMBER 5, 1808.

DANIEL ii. 21.

He removeth kings, and setteth up kings.

^a **ALTHOUGH** a superintending Providence be acknowledged to preside over the whole course of affairs, both of particular persons, and those of nations, yet we are disposed to think, from a vain wish to discover its immediate operation, that this controul is more conspicuously displayed in the convulsions and fall of kingdoms, than in the ordinary changes of the condition of the individual. The Deity seems to approach nearer to us in inflicting his judgments, than in dispensing his mercies; and his power is apparently rendered more distinguishable from the efforts and wisdom of man in the destruction, than in the

^a I had not at this time seen an able discourse on the same occasion by the Rev. R. Churton, Archdeacon of St. David's. I can judge of the labour and success of his research. I likewise searched in vain the Bodleian and other catalogues for the book which Dr. Milner has cited under the title of Political Catechism.

preservation of states. It is from the impression, which this sentiment makes upon the mind, that, when nations commemorate their deliverances from the rage or the machinations of political or religious factions, they incur some danger of perpetuating a vindictive spirit of animosity against those, who transmit the name, and profess the opinions of the ancient aggressors. It is painful, by the acknowledgment of mercies shewn to ourselves, to remind others of the delinquency of their predecessors; and this sacrifice of thanksgiving may perhaps engage on the side of devotion those feelings, which without this religious homage might tend only to renew the resentment of former grievances.

The two great events, the memory of which the appointment of this festival was intended to preserve, have, at different periods, excited different degrees of interest in this country; and the time has again arrived, when the one, whose importance seemed to be merged in the glory of the other, has regained the power of attracting curiosity, and of stimulating enquiry.

The necessity of reviewing a large part of the history of this event in particular has proceeded from the public assertions of a modern

adversary of no mean name and rank among his own people. It ^bhas been confidently averred, that this sanguinary stratagem was in reality the invention of a Protestant Minister of state, to make an opposite religious party odious in the eyes of the nation; so that, if this fact be truly represented, our gratitude to Providence has been annually offered up in error for fancied mercies, and a fictitious deliverance.

Although the Catholics had disturbed the government of the first James at an early period by frequent conspiracies, yet they had been treated with a lenity, during his separate reign in Scotland, which roused the suspicions of Elizabeth, and the jealousy of his Protestant subjects. If the sovereign Pontiff had been exasperated, although he might not have been able to prevent by his hostile interposition, yet he might have obstructed by many difficulties the accession of this prince to the throne of England; and might afterwards have continued to harass his settlement in his new kingdom with the opposition of a body of men more numerous, and more active, than those of the same persuasion in Scotland. As the

^b See note (A) at the end.

time approached, when it was probable that he would soon be the successor of Elizabeth, his communications with the court of Rome, chiefly relating to his right to the English crown, were frequent and secret. Of the reality of these communications the proof is clear and full; and, if we were to add to them the celebrated letter to Clement VIII. without intimating that the authenticity of this instrument has not been acknowledged by historians in general, still the attachment of James to the Catholic religion would scarcely appear to be stronger than before. That he might “ declare in ^d open parliament, that he considered the church of Rome as the mother Church, although defiled with some corruptions;” that he “ might admit the Pope to be the Patriarch of the west;” that “ the King’s disposition was for peace and reconciliation with Rome at the beginning;” are circumstances, all of which may be conceded to our adversary, without diminishing the strength of the argument. Such considerations do not indicate any inclination in the King to

^c See note (B) at the end.

^d But in the same speech he very uncourteously terms the Pope, “ that three-crowned monarch, or rather monster.” Rapin, vol. ii. p. 166.

grant liberty of conscience to the Catholics, nor is the acknowledgment of "some degree of ecclesiastical supremacy belonging to the Pontiff," to be adduced as a necessary preliminary, or a pledge of that indulgence. If then the zeal of James for the support of the Catholic cause does not, even according to the researches of an acute adversary, much exceed this scanty measure, why should the Minister be accused of alienating the regard of his Master, or of diverting the current of his benevolence? If however this accusation comprised all the odious interference of the Minister, we should not be surpris'd, nor think it necessary to vindicate his ardour. But, when we are further required to believe, that he was the author of a plot, by means of which he chiefly intended to remove a person, whose offence consisted in being a witness to the King's strong promises "to shew indulgence to the Catholics of England, whenever he should mount the throne of his country," we anxiously examine the evidence of such guilt. Yet how does indignation supplant every other emotion, when we discover in a contemporary document, that this man could not be the depositary of promises, which, by his own unbiass'd confession, were never made. He de-

clared in effect that in his interview with the King “ he could not obtain any promise, “ hope, or comfort of encouragement to Catholics concerning toleration.” We do not here appeal to the writings of partial and obscure annalists, which are now rarely to be found, because they were originally insignificant ; but to an instrument of high authority, of easy access, and of general notoriety. We are indeed ready to admit that Raleigh’s conspiracy, as *this* plot was called, had been ascribed to Cecil before the trial : but as he was then confronted with the accused, the latter would not have hesitated, in his own defence, to have retorted the accusation upon the secret author. When both were present, then was the time to disclose the real agent. The fact however is, that Cecil was exculpated from any participation in this enterprise by the confession and trial of the parties themselves concerned in this conspiracy. But it is alledged, that “ this artful minister was not long without finding the means of wreaking his vengeance upon the whole catholic body, and “ (which was his principal object) of dissolving the ties by which the King was united

* State Trials, vol. i. p. 203.

“ to them.” It does not appear from any historical facts of what kind those ties were by which James was so firmly attached to the Catholics. But whatever they might be, they still continued unaltered and unbroken, even after the discovery of this atrocious conspiracy. He acquainted his parliament, that he was willing to confine the guilt of it to the individuals who were detected in its execution, and not to involve in a general suspicion and censure the majority of that persuasion. Thus imperfectly was the vengeance of the Minister wreaked upon his devoted victims, if the blow were intercepted in its descent by the King himself. The number, the weight, and the characters of the conspirators have been adduced as reasons, why we should not attribute this barbarous project to the Catholics at large. But this question cannot be determined merely by the consideration of what proportion of persons ought to be concerned in devising and executing any plan, so as to justify an observer in referring it to the body, to which the individuals, who engaged in it, belonged. This is to change a moral into an arithmetical enquiry. The small number of the agents is not to be compared with the number of persons, of which the sect consists,

in order to ascertain the proportion which one might bear to the other. We are rather to refer the number of agents to the nature of the deed, to its compatibility with the necessary degree of secrecy, and to the manner in which they were to put it into execution. We do not altogether reject the consideration of an assemblage of persons numerically, because it may be composed of so few, that they would not be employed to effect any political purpose whatever.

It is however admitted, that in the present instance there was another part of the conspiracy, the execution of which depended upon the success of the first. It may be lightly described in this manner, that some of the traitors were "only concerned in the scheme of "an insurrection;" but a plot and an insurrection require a very different force to ensure the desired issue of each. Will not therefore the proposed insurrection, in conjunction with the plot, extend the knowledge and the guilt of this execrable device to a larger proportion of the Catholics, than the plot alone? We may enquire, in what manner has our adversary computed their number? By what he terms "the act of attainder." By thus restricting our enquiry, we may abridge the

enumeration of the agents, and perhaps contract the sphere of their project: but why should we suppose that the law operated so exactly as to comprehend all the guilty, or, that the whole of the guilty were so improvident in their deliberations, that punishment was here commensurate with criminality?

They were, it is also said, not only few in number, but deficient "in weight and character." But what degree of consequence is it expected that *conspirators* should possess? If we regard the part which they were to act, we are, on the contrary, surprised that so few of them should want the personal requisites to make their treachery to be the effort of mean and desperate, and unsupported adventurers? Some of them were persons of family and opulence, none of them were destitute of education, and others possessed amiable qualities and conciliatory manners. If we add to this favourable but accurate delineation of their origin, and habits in general, the counteracting defects, which are formally ascribed to one or more of them, youth and temerity, we shall add all that historical truth can require; and yet we add nothing that, with the exception of their cooperation in this daring attempt,

would otherwise impair their weight, or debase their character.

Our adversary is again ready with a complicated and unstable objection, that they were ^f“apostates and outcasts from the body of the Catholics;” or, they were “not ^gRecufants;” or, they were “nominal Catholics;” or, “*if* any of them were Catholics, or so died, they were known Protestants not long before.” It is evident from the inconsistency of these suppositions, that the private religious opinions of these persons must be inferred from their actions, where we cannot obtain any precise and regular declaration of their belief. But we cannot conclude that they were apostates from the Catholic body, and at the same time recent and unsteady converts from Protestantism. The casuistical doubt, which seemed to perplex one of the chief actors in this enormity, and which related to a difficulty only in the execution, and not to the principle of the

^f Milner, p. 270. note (1).

^g Henry Earl of Northumberland was fined in the Star Chamber “for having admitted Thomas Percy his kinsman to be a Gentleman Pensioner without administering the oath of supremacy, when he knew him to be a Recufant.” History of the Gunpowder Treason, p. 31.

deed, was resolved ultimately by the superior of the English jesuits; and this oracular decision was confidently appealed to as having sufficient authority to dispel the same sceptical uncertainty that arose in the minds of some of his nefarious colleagues. ^h The counsellors then, to whom he repaired, were Jesuits, who did not hesitate to communicate their responses to an enquiring "outcast and apostate." We may still further ask, from what religious party are converts in general to derive their characteristic denomination; from the one which they relinquish, or from that by which they are received? To which is to belong the distinction, and to which the disgrace of their choice? To which are the last virtues, or the last vices of their lives to be ascribed? "The dying behaviour," as it is called, of these apostates is adduced as a proof that "they did not act in conformity with the principles of their religion, even as they conceived it, and that they did not think the horrible attempt, in which they were engaged, lawful and meritorious." ⁱ Admitting that they closed their lives with penitence worthy of the purest

^h See note (C) at the end.

ⁱ See note (D) at the end.

system of religious opinions, we must still consider whether the principles of their religion, or the original feelings of human nature, operated most strongly in producing their dubious concern. Their compunction came too late. Their sentiments must have been very different on the prospect of a successful conclusion of their enterprise; and at the time of failure, disappointment, and death. Did they falter in their career in consequence of the counsel which they solicited? They prepared their plan without any interruption from their own consciences, or those of their advisers. Religion did not alarm them with its terrors till they had first tried what they could effect. The contemplation of the attempt was not attended with any doubts or remorse which were creditable to their principles, and their end was the same as that of other baffled assassins.—^k It is to be further remarked, that

^k “ Thomas Winter was sent into Spain, by the joint advice of Henry Garnet, and Oswald Tesmond, jesuit, and of Robert Catesby, and Francis Tresham, *gentlemen of good quality and reputation*, to try what could be done for their assistance, that were ready to sacrifice their lives and fortunes for the catholic cause,” History of the Gunpowder Treason, collected from approved Authors as well Popish as Protestant, 1678.

some of the principal agents in this plot were the same persons who had, in the name of the English Catholics in general, secretly applied to the court of Spain for assistance in the time of Elizabeth. The Popish Plot has therefore been regarded by historians as a continuation of the former; and can we suppose that it was calculated to gratify the inclinations of a smaller number of persons than the scheme of the cooperation of domestic insurgents with the forces of a foreign invader? There is however proof that the plot was not altogether disagreeable to the Roman Pontiff, although it is said that the superior of the English Jesuits "well knew that he would never approve of so diabolical an undertaking." The Catholics both here and at Rome could nevertheless solemnly petition Heaven to favour the intentions of the conspirators; and it is affirmed, not by any irritated Protestant, but by a Jesuit, that the "Pontiff was acquainted with the design, and had proper bulls ready to be issued upon the success of it¹." Such then are the grounds, upon

¹ "It is affirmed by the voluntary confession of a Jesuit, That at this time there were two bulls procured from the Pope, and ready upon this occasion, and should have been published, had the powder done the

which we continue to think that this plot has been appropriately designated by its common epithet, as indicatory of the agents, and of the particular interests, which it was their object to promote.

We are now to examine briefly the means which the minister Cecil is said to have used either to suppress or to pervert the evidence, by which his agency in this affair might have been detected.—That he permitted four of the traitors to be destroyed, whose persons he might have secured without sacrificing their lives, from the consciousness that they could have exposed his participation in their project, is a supposition which will not influence the most credulous mind, as it requires the previous, or rather the simultaneous belief of several inconsistent particulars. Is it probable that this participation should be known to those four persons only? Why did not the murderous hireling, who escaped with wounds only from the arm of the magistrate, betray their lurking employer? It ^mis urged as an

“intended execution; but, that failing, they were suppressed.” Foulis’s *Romish Treas.* Vid. Bp. Andrews, *Respons.* ad Apolog. Bellarmine, c. v. p. 113.

^m “Sir R. Walsb having gotten sure trial of their taking harbour at the house above named, he did send

article of crimination, that no directions were given for employing the milder expedient of apprehension, when a delay sufficient for that purpose had intervened; and that it would have been easy to have taken them alive. But no directions are specified by historians relative either to the capture or the death of these men. Is it extraordinary that persons should “not be taken alive who had resolved “to break through their opposers, and die fighting?” Death was the effect of their own choice, not the preconcerted strong resource of the Minister against babbling accomplices, who would “have related the story less to his advantage, than he caused it to be pub-

“trumpeters and messengers to them, commanding them
 “in the King’s name to render unto him, His Majesties
 “Minister, and knowing no more at that time of their
 “guilt than was publickly visible, did promise, upon
 “their dutiful and obedient rendring unto him, to inter-
 “cede at the King’s hands for the sparing of their lives,
 “who received only from them this scornful answer,
 “That he had need of better assistance than of those few
 “numbers that were with him before he could be able to
 “cominand or controul them.” Gunpowder Treason,
 p. 68.

“Then said Catesby to me, (standing by the door
 “they were to enter,) Stand by me, and we will die to-
 “gether.” Winter’s confession, Gunpowder Treason,
 p. 60.

“lished.” After having thus disposed of the living witnesses, we are informed that he published interested and false narratives of this dark affair, which have misled “the generality of writers.” *All* the accounts, which we have of this affair, did not proceed from the inventive and fabricating diligence of Cecil, and his “plot wrights.” There is surely one exception among the documents of the time, which he neither composed, nor mutilated, nor augmented, nor did it require his patronage. Did he publish and circulate the trials of the conspirators? Did they confess at his instigation, or by his direction? Did he procure persons to falsify these records? Did he dictate the confessions of the conspirators against themselves? and by what known means could he induce them to conceal all that was unfavourable to himself, and relate only all that was destructive to their own cause? Do not the generality of later writers follow these as much as any other public and contemporary instruments? We may confidently repeat the question, for it will well bear the repetition, Why did not the Conspirators boldly accuse the Secretary when they had the opportunity? Why did he so rashly venture so often into their presence? Why did he appear at

their trials, if he had been conscious that he might have been betrayed? Did he confer with those traitors only who were killed? Did *they* never speak of their illustrious confederate to others? Is it probable that the Jesuits, Garnet in particular, should know so many other circumstances of the conspiracy, and be ignorant of this? The silence of the Conspirators at this time must be assumed as a proof that they had it *not* in their power to palliate their guilt by a declaration, which they had every worldly inducement to alledge^o.—I have thus examined “the faithful view,” as it is denominated, of this conspiracy. It cannot be expected that the detail should be completely developed from this place; at the same time it is not very defective. It is difficult to confine such a discussion to the limits prescribed to me on the present occasion. There are other topics, which from their minuteness could not be explained orally, and from their merely secular character could not be here introduced with propriety.

Another important branch of the enquiry also claims our attention. We are now to turn our eyes from the endeavours of subjects

^o See note (E) at the end.

to establish the Catholic religion, to the attempt of a Sovereign to attain the same object.

It has been supposed by no vulgar authority, that the motives of the political conduct of the second James have been misunderstood by the earlier historians, from the want of that private information, which we now possess. His most important actions are thought to have proceeded from a predominant desire of absolute power. But we must remember, that he was a bigot long before he ascended the throne; and can we believe, that it is consistent, not with the fact only, but also with the constitution of human nature, that this bigotry should suddenly lose its known and characteristic property as a principle; that it should inspire inactivity with a larger scope for action, and that it should produce no effects with the power of producing the greatest? This is not merely to reject a portion of the annals of the country, but to mutilate the history of man. But even these contemned annals do not exhibit any such moral anomalies. Were the proceedings of the legislature respecting the *Exclusion* founded on a general mistake, or merely on a religious prejudice? They wished to prevent the combination in

the same person of certain religious sentiments with the authority of a Sovereign; and the event shewed, that their anticipation of evils was not a weak and hypothetical foreboding, and that their deliberations were not the ordinary contention of adverse parties. Can we imagine that the King's proceedings in this place were only the wanton speculation of an arbitrary ruler? that his interference was only tentative and exploratory, to ascertain how far he might shake and controul the independence of these ecclesiastical bodies; and that the opinions of the respective persons, who were the objects either of his dangerous favour, or of his contemptible resentment, were otherwise of no account? That he wished to govern his people without the medium of their representatives was a part, and a part only, of his inauspicious ambition. An attempt of this magnitude makes so strong an impression upon the minds of Britons, that it is with difficulty we can calmly and dispassionately regard such an enterprise in the degraded light of means for the attainment of some other object, when it appears to be itself that object which would occupy the powers of the mind exclusively, and require for its pursuit and attainment every instrument, similar and opposite, animate

and inanimate, that could be employed. But do we really discern any inadequacy in the object, compared with the means, when we suppose that this object relates to a general change of the established religion of a country? Do we perceive that this could be accomplished by expedients of uncertain agency, and by an engine of less force? The substitution of edicts for laws, intrigues with a foreign state to obtain pecuniary supplies, instead of a manly application to his own people, and attempts to dispense with the execution of statutes, are all of them indeed the resources of a despot; but they also mark the necessary career of a regal bigot, who, if he wished to establish his own system of belief, must either find, or make his subjects slaves. If however we set aside these abstract arguments, and recur to the fact, we shall see in the authorities themselves, to which an appeal is made, that the establishment of the Catholic religion was the stipulated return which was expected for the bountiful aid of the royal ally and coadjutor. But if this be an error, that the bigotry of James is not to be overlooked in the analysis of his government, it is

an error, in which the actors in the great event, which put an end to his machinations and his reign, persisted; and they do not seem to have considered whether it was possible for a Catholic King to observe the ancient laws and ordinances of the country, and the new ones, which they intended to devise, but they considered Protestantism as a necessary qualification for the princely office, and as a better guarantee of their rights and liberties. It was easier also for the people to make a new contract with a new Governor, than to obtain a faithful acquiescence in the justest requisitions from the insidious Monarch on the throne.

¶ It has been a subject of discussion, by what name this great fact should be perpetuated. This important change, it is said, we are not to denominate a revolution, and our ancestors have affixed to it an improper appellation. It cannot perhaps be made to correspond with the definition of the logician; but is it surprising that he is unable to bind the meaning of the term with such bonds? We

¶ The sentiments which I here oppose may be found in a Sermon, preached before the University of Oxford on the fifth of November, 1804. by the Rev. H. Phillpotts, M. A. now Prebendary of Durham.

may class and generalize political events to facilitate arrangement, or to assist recollection: but by what rules shall we prohibit the use of a term, merely because it cannot be reduced under any of the artificial divisions which we have invented? Is the historian to suspend the insertion of great actions in the records of fame till the recluse have found names to express their essential distinctions? It is in vain to remonstrate, after the lapse of so long a period, against the imposition of a term, the use of which has been sanctioned by time, consecrated by the opinion of the wise and good, and will be perpetuated by strong associations, and can only be rendered obsolete by the loss of that liberty, of which it would remain the melancholy memorial. We are also to be restrained from applying to this event the epithet glorious. We are directed to seek for the glory, of which we boast, in the character, and not in the consequences, of this event. Certainly there was no glory in the attempt to subvert the religion and govern-

^r The Speaker's reply to the city address: "They have taken notice of the most eminent courage and constancy the city hath shewed in the late Revolution." Chandler's History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, vol. ii. p. 283. 1689.

ment of the country. We do not glory in the faults or crimes of others. God forbid that we should find in offences against God, or man, any subject of exultation, or wish, that such offences should "come." But we do derive a manly and rational satisfaction from reflecting on the resistance which was then made to the arbitrary encroachments of the Sovereign on the liberties of the people. We glory indeed in this resistance; but we do *not* glory in the cause which made it necessary, and which left no other remedy for the public grievances in the hands of our ancestors. Whatever moderation however might appear in the conduct of men who had suffered so much, and might have acted rashly from a just apprehension of suffering much more from the tenour of the Monarch's proceedings; yet we are to recollect, that we must not attribute to their untried wisdom and moderation that peaceful termination of the contest, which really arose from the well-timed but ignoble flight of their Sovereign. But is it ingenuous to enumerate among the essential constituents of revolutions in general, one of the sore judgments of the Almighty, the sword, and to intimate, that it must *necessarily* "pass through the land?" Are men to adapt their forbear-

ance to these alarms, and to be satisfied that, as long as life is spared, they possess all that reasonable men and peaceable citizens can require? This is, as is well known, to estimate mere existence, and the tenure of it, under such circumstances, erroneously. The value, which is here set upon it, is too great; but those who love their lives *so* well, must also be content to have their days numbered at the will of an earthly superior.—We are also further apprized, that the authors of the Revolution did not talk of the rights of men, but of the rights of Englishmen. That we should hear more of the rights of Englishmen than of the rights of men, cannot be a matter of admiration. Their rights in general were, not for the first time, asserted. The artificial are also more extensive than the natural rights; and although the former may be agreeable to the spirit of the latter, yet they could not be deduced from that source. Trial by jury is the right, and the right by birth, of an Englishman; but it would be difficult to trace its origin to any natural right. These artificial rights, the creatures of society, are, by their peculiar formation, more liable to be invaded than the natural rights. They are not so easily nor so perfectly understood, and do not

address themselves so much to our feelings:—These might be perhaps some of the reasons of the silence respecting the rights of men.

By this memorable transaction the Revolutionists taught, that from the rights of one party flow certain duties of the other; that the regal state is not a species of hereditary property only, but also an office which has certain relative duties belonging to it; and likewise, that the regal authority has its limits, but that its limits are identified with those duties. In the case of any attempt to subvert the government, or, in other words, to violate these fundamental principles of justice, they rather revived than established the doctrine of resistance, which is distinctly recognised in the ^s Articles of the Great Charter. If we consider that the turbulent barons of that period required the whole community to obtain, both by defined and by undefined resistance, the possession of the property of the Sovereign, till their wrongs were redressed, we cannot but admire the delicacy, the generosity, and the justice, which dictated a reverence for the person of the King, and those

^s See *Articuli Carte Reg. Johann.* p. ix. *Blackstone's Law Tracts*, ed. 4to.

of all the royal house, in the midst of those resolute provisions, which they framed to secure the fulfilment of the political contract, and whilst they still retained their swords in their hands. To revert to first principles is a language frequently used to denote a recurrence to some natural right, when those rights, which are derived from the society in which we are placed, are no longer regarded. But we here see, that it will either signify this, or a recurrence to the ancient forms of the constitution, where the resistance of the people under the calamity of hopeless tyranny is resolved into the natural right, and received into its due rank. Hence also it appears, that anciently there was supposed to reside in the monarch a large proportion of personal responsibility, since violent and unjust public proceedings were immediately referred to himself as the author; and this is not obscurely intimated in the precedent of the Revolution, where, if the deluded James could have transferred his guilt and its punishment to his advisers, he would have been most eager to have availed himself of any speculative fiction, by which he himself could have been declared innocent, and could have obtained a formal immunity from the effects of the re-

sentment of a people, who had resolved to be free.

What degree of political influence the Catholics in this country may again obtain, seemed at one period to depend on the result of an enquiry into the present state of their religious opinions. But it is not easy to ascertain what tenets they now profess. Their principal advocate exults in the misrepresentations of their adversaries. But whilst they are more ready to declare what they *do not*, than what they *do* believe, whilst they will not direct us to purer or more genuine sources of information, the charge of misrepresentation on our side will be converted into that of subtle and interested concealment on theirs. If we appeal to a canon of a council, they reply, that its effects were local, and its authority temporary; if we specify a doctrine, they intimate, that it is obsolete; if we object the institution of the Inquisition, we are assured, that its fires are extinguished, and its prisons closed; and as to the Papal power, its harmlessness and its limits are at once illustrated by its restriction to spiritual matters. We are told, that this change of sentiment is to be attributed to the progress of general science, and the diffusion of learning, and that

the proof of it is to be collected from the declarations of liberal and enlightened individuals, and from the decisions of academical bodies. But liberal and enlightened individuals do not perhaps constitute a competent tribunal to determine this question. If it be to their liberality and illumination that we are to refer their rejection of what were formerly esteemed some of the most momentous articles of their creed, as the Supremacy and Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, it is probable that the other parts of a religion, which is founded so deeply on the derived personal authority of its teachers, retain but a slight hold on the minds of men thus liberal and enlightened; and that, whilst we seem to have the opinion of the scientific and literate, we have perhaps mistaken for it the levity and relaxed conduct of a band of sceptics and scoffers. If we examine the characters of the academical bodies whose decisions we are to respect, some of them reside in a country where a great part of their learning consists of such branches as have been rejected in this, on account of their inutility, for nearly two centuries, and is also limited to those fountains, from which alone the Roman Pontiff previously permits the thirsting multitude "to

“draw freely.” Such an application might indeed inform us what influence the learning, the extension of commerce, and the general spirit of liberty in our own country might have on the determination of these questions, and but little else has been learnt from the enquiry.” It is not so much from the operation of some principle from within, as from restraint imposed by others from without, that a seeming change has been produced in this extraordinary polity. How far a system, which has for its basis the subjugation of the mind and judgment, can be improved from the action of principles in its own constitution, is not easy to conjecture. But can the opinions of individuals, however liberal or learned, or of academical bodies, however illustrious, be made the grounds of any legislative proceedings respecting the enlargement or contraction of the privileges of the Catholics, whilst the Roman Pontiff is overlooked, whose spiritual authority is still paramount to every other, and who could confirm, reverse, or invalidate the decisions of assemblies, which might not be adapted to the real policy of the times? Respecting the future situation of the Catholics it would be presumptuous to obtrude any opinion in this place. I would only remark,

that it may be useful to consider how far we may have mistaken our own ignorance of their religious opinions for a change of them on their part. It would be necessary for those who have such doubts, and there are many that have, to ascertain whether our adversaries still think, and still teach their children so, that they do God service in killing those, whom, under the name of heretics, they thrust out of the synagogue. We do utterly deny, that in recurring to the records of history, and in enumerating the enormities and cruelties of Protestants, and comparing them as to kind and degree with those of the Catholics, it is merely “opposing history to history, and “the man of blood to the man of blood.”

† Persecution is not an article in the Primer of Protestants. It is not a subject of the early precepts of our teachers. *We have no opinions on which we could found it.* We do not think that the Almighty will dispense salvation according to the distinction of churches; or that there are persons who have power on earth to forgive sins, or who can, here in the

† The question is very imperfectly and fallaciously stated, if it is confined to this consideration; which set of men is more or less disposed to abuse power, when they possess it.

flesh, bar the doors of mercy, or open the gates of hell.

We do not with decorous affectation condemn a persecuting spirit, whilst we teach that there are cases, where it is a duty, and persons, who are the appropriate objects of it; but we teach, that it is so far from resembling a duty, that it is a violation of all others, and most contrary to the nature of every thing which pretends to be religion. If however upon the most exact scrutiny it should appear, that opposite tenets are still maintained by our adversaries, the conclusion would certainly be this; that no Protestant could wish to see *again* such persons, or such opinions, among “the many noble” and the “many mighty” “of Cæsar’s household.”

I shall be satisfied with specifying one general conclusion, although the subject might suggest many others; namely, that however desirable a state of national tranquillity may appear to be in a speculative light, yet where the powers of the mind, the emotions of the heart, and the strength of the animal frame are permitted, in any country, to produce their full effects in determining and improving the condition of man, there the balance of the political constitution can never be quiescent,

and where such an equilibrium is supposed to exist, we find on one side a despot, and on the other, slaves.

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

NOTES AND DISQUISITIONS.

APPENDIX.

IT could not be a doubt whether some notes were necessary, but how far they should extend. I have included in them several disquisitions, which will enlarge my original plan of confining the discussion to some general positions contained in "The Dissonance," and will comprehend an examination of the Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man. I have called the whole an Appendix; but I think that the contingency of perusal is exactly equal, whether the name Notes or Appendix be used, when it is necessary to seek for information in any other place than the page immediately before the eye.

Page 1. *Theological writers.* The elegant author of "Letters to Soame Jenyns, Esq." has deduced more from this remark than, I think, the case will justify. Pag. 31, 32. "He leaves behind him for his disciples
" a few fishermen, and persons in low life, remarkable
" for nothing, while he was with them upon earth, but
" profound ignorance, *natural incapacity*, dulness of ap-
" prehension, and erroneous views of their Master's doc-
" trine, intentions, and kingdom. Now it is by these
" manifestly ignorant, dull, and *incapable* persons, that
" the sublime doctrines and truths of the Gospel are re-
" corded and published. Here, I say, the tenor of the
" argument changes, and here the proof of a superna-
" tural dispensation properly commences. Why? Because

“ we have here a real miracle, and miracles alone are the “ direct proof of a commission immediately divine.” Lett. by Archibald Maclaine, D. D. It might be objected to this reasoning, that as we have not a knowledge of all the powers of nature, so we have not any standard of the capacities of men; and the Gospel might possibly have been a late invention of man, as well as any of the arts which he has discovered. But we are not to collect the inspiration, or original revelation of the Gospel, from reasoning on the narrow extent of the intellectual faculties of the human species. Had the Gospel been a mere system of moral and religious precepts, the notion of invention would have been somewhat plausible; but so many facts relating to its Author are interwoven with the Gospel, and on account of that relation have become parts of its doctrines, as almost exclude the possibility of its invention, as the result of improved reason, or indeed as being in the least connected with mere reason in this manner.

P. 2. *eloquence and learning*. “ Erant hi viri, plebei, pauperes, illiterati, neque vel artibus, vel dotibus illis instructi, quæ auctoritatem, fidemque apud alios parere, mentesque ad temere credendum impellere solent; tales autem eos esse volebat, ne quis fructus muneris et legationis eorum non divinæ virtuti, verum *eloquentiæ*, auctoritati, aliisque causis humanis et naturalibus adscribere posset.” Mosheim de Reb. Christ. ante Const. M.

P. 4. *philosophical Greek geographer*. I beg leave to notice the following passage in Mr. Carwithen’s Bampton Lectures respecting this writer: “ But if the Grecian poet has also been dignified by Strabo with the appellation of the first and greatest of geographers, because

“ he has recounted the names of a few petty tribes engaged in a temporary alliance for the execution of a military enterprize, which he alone has drawn forth from obscurity, and rescued from oblivion, but which are now vanished from the earth, and whose place can no where be found, &c.” I would refer Mr. C. to the *second* page of Strabo for the reasons why he calls Homer the first of geographers, and he will not find this among the number; and also to Schoennemann’s *Commentatio de Geographia Homeris*, a prize exercise published at Göttingen, the object of which was, “*orbis terrarum faciem, qualis depingitur ab Homero, declarare, hoc est, ex utroque poetæ principis opere, tam Iliade, quam Odyssæa, quicquid iis geographici argumenti continetur, diligenter ac plene colligere, ita, ut Homero duce, per tres orbis partes eatur.*” The knowledge of Homer, and the judgment of Strabo, should not be impugned conjecturally, but upon a perusal of their respective writings.

P. 5. *erudition of the schools of Tarsus.* Michaelis says, that “many have supposed that St. Paul was endowed with a great share of profane learning, and have ascribed to him a knowledge of all those sciences, which might have been learnt in the schools of Tarsus. But this opinion seems *totally ungrounded*; and I subscribe, on the whole, to the sentiments of Dr. Thalemann, in his treatise ‘*De Eruditione Pauli Apostoli, Judaica, non Græca.*’ Michaelis by Marth, vol. i. p. 153. The account of Tarsus, and the character of St. Paul, diminish very much the probability, that he remained an exception to the remark of Strabo, or that he confined his reading to the Greek poets, and neglected the Greek philosophy. St. Paul would not deserve attention, if he had spoken

of the wisdom of this world without being acquainted with its nature and teachers.

P. 17. *Upon that ground only.* The reader may observe, that an advantage is here taken of the nature of this external evidence. It does not, indeed it cannot, reach to every individual passage of a book. And this may be regarded as an advantage; for otherwise it might interfere with, and perhaps supersede the internal. It would also become more of an authoritative declaration, that such and no other was the true archetype of the Gospel, than remain what it is, a plain testimony, which suggests rather than excludes a comparison of other copies of the sacred books.

P. 18. *taught orally.* This topic I have enlarged upon in another discourse. It was suggested by the following passage in Priestley's Answer to Evanson, p. 8. "The books called the Gospels were not the cause, but the effect of the belief of Christianity in the first ages. For Christianity had been propagated with great success long before those books were written; nor had the publication of them any particular effect in adding to the number of Christian converts. Christians received the books because they knew beforehand that the contents of them were true; and they were at that time of no further use than to ascertain and fix the testimony of living witnesses, in order to its being transmitted without variation to succeeding ages. For what could have been the preaching of the Gospel originally, but a recital of the discourses and miracles of Christ by those who were eye-witnesses of them to those who were not. The Gospels therefore contain the substance of all their preaching." I cannot refrain from subjoin-

ing an extract from a work by the pious and learned Richard Baxter. "Yea more, it is past doubt that a man may (in some cases or circumstances) be a true Christian, who knoweth not that there is any Scripture, which is God's infallible word. *For first so all believers of the old world were saved, before Moses wrote the law. And the Christian churches were gathered, and thousands converted to Christ, many years before a word of the New Testament was written.*" More Reasons for the Christian Religion, p. 22.

P. 19. *This circumstance essentially distinguishes, &c.*" The authenticity of the history of Herodotus likewise was established in a peculiar manner not only by the recitation of it at the Olympic games, but previously in several of the states of Greece, according to Lucian, p. 327. ed. Bourdelot.

P. 20. *authenticity of the whole.* "Now my reasons, says the admirable Baxter, "why I take every history, chronology, genealogy in Scripture as certainly true, and every other word, which is spoken by a true prophet and apostle as by the Spirit, (and not disowned by the Scripture itself,) but especially such as you accuse in the Gospel, are these; first, *a priori*, because it seemeth to me that the writing of the whole books of the New Testament by them was done in the discharge of the commission given them by Christ. And he promised his Apostles his Spirit for the performance of all their commissioned office work. *This writing is part of the preaching which Christ sent them for.* And no doubt but the Spirit did cause them to write all the substantial part: and therefore we have reason to think that the smallest parts are from the same Author, and that he assisted them in the least as well as

“the greatest.” And again; “And though all the reasons which I have given prove, that the truth of the Christian religion may be certainly proved, though we could not prove every by-expression in the Scripture to be true; and though we deny not but the penmen manifested their human imperfections in style and method; yet if each passage were not true, it would be so great a temptation to the weak, and make it so difficult to know in some points what is true, in comparison of what it would be, if all be true, that we have no reason to imagine this difficulty ourselves, while it is unproved.” *More Reasons for the Christian Religion, &c.* by R. Baxter. I refer the reader with much satisfaction to this treatise, the author of which has been insidiously called by a modern Archdeacon, who in much humility calls his own voice, in his own favour, “the voice of truth,” a *regicide*! This man should not meddle with past history; himself and his own actions will furnish a period and events better suited to his deepest consideration and timely correction.

P. 32. *Those miracles.* Bishop Bagot has well distinguished the evidences of miracles and prophecy in his first sermon at Bishop Warburton's Lecture, pp. 22, 23. “The argument from prophecy, thus urged, (in one comprehensive view,) adds a credibility to those miracles, which once carried their own conviction with them. In former ages, while the first design only of prophecy was in view, (namely, to raise hopes and expectations in the minds of men, without which no religion could have subsisted in the world,) then was their faith in it commonly confirmed by some miraculous work. Of this kind was the immediate change in the serpent's form when our first parents received the original promise of a future restoration; such the mira-

“culous birth of Isaac, and many other like instances.
 “Now in their turn prophecies accomplished give an
 “assurance to our faith in past miracles, which includes
 “one evident reason why miracles should cease to be re-
 “peated, since the other, from their nature, must be go-
 “ing on to the end of the world.”

P. 33. *With regard to miracles, &c.* It will appear to the reader, as he proceeds, that I might have extended my present investigation to another volume, even if I had compressed, as far as perspicuity would allow, the discussion of each topic. The following extract would furnish materials for an entire discourse. Diffonance, p. 7. “And in the New Testament, in conformity to this
 “criterion given us by Moses, we are assured upon the
 “highest authority, that ‘the testimony of Jesus is the
 “spirit of prophecy.’ Either therefore those predictions
 “contained in the New Testament, which relate to the
 “present time and to times already past, must have been
 “fulfilled, or else the Gospel itself must be an imposture,
 “and of no authority at all. Now the obvious purport
 “of almost all the prophecies of the Gospel, as they are
 “disperfed in different scriptures of the New Testament,
 “is to predict the circumstances of a most unhappy cor-
 “ruption of the genuine religion of Jesus, which began
 “to operate even in the days of the Apostles themselves,
 “and was to end in an entire apostasy from the truths of
 “the Gospel, and the establishment of a false, fabulous,
 “irrational, idolatrous, blasphemous superstition, first by
 “the civil power of the Roman empire, under some fig-
 “nal change in its circumstances, and afterwards by the
 “civil power of all those western kingdoms, into which
 “that empire, at its dissolution, was to be divided. And
 “the same prophecies assure us, that the true religion of
 “Christ would be no where generally received, till after

" the same civil powers, which established it, shall have
 " abolished and destroyed the Antichristian church thus
 " predicted. Unless therefore the testimony of these
 " prophecies fails us entirely, and the Gospel itself is
 " false, the orthodox church established by Constantine,
 " which is now, and has been ever since his time, in some
 " modification of it or other, the only religion established
 " by the civil powers of Europe, is the very object of
 " these prophecies, the completion of the predicted apo-
 " stasy; for no other is to be found." It is added in a
 note, that ^a " if there be, let the zealous advocates of the
 " doctrines of that church, and her canonical scriptures,
 " point it out to us; or, if that be not in their power, let
 " them honestly and candidly yield to the force of argu-
 " ments founded upon the infallible word of the God of
 " truth." The idolatry, to which Mr. E. refers, is the
 worship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God; and this, in
 his opinion, constitutes the apostasy which the Apostle
 predicted. We have no comparison of these prophecies
 with this alledged fulfilment, but merely an asserted ac-
 cordance of one with the other. An opponent therefore
 might, on this ground, be excused from proceeding with
 the controversy. But it is better to examine where this
 maze of hypothesis leads. It may be observed then that
 there are two branches of this apostasy: the idolatry it-
 self, and the accommodation of certain entire books, or
 parts of certain books, of the New Testament to this ido-
 latrous system, which accommodation was also, it seems,
 a subject of particular prophecy. That part of the question
 which relates to the corruption or fabrication of books
 I have examined in another place. The enquiry whether
 the worship of Jesus Christ the Son of God is idolatry, is
 determined by assuming, that he was a mere man, and

^a Diffonance, p. 25, 26.

therefore the worship of our Saviour is the worship of a man long since dead, according to the language and interpretation of ^b Julian. Mr. E. has observed at what time the adoration of saints and martyrs commenced, and has arbitrarily assigned the worship of our Saviour to the same date. There only remains this question, the mere humanity of our Saviour. This it would be presumptuous to discuss generally, as if it were a new topic. It will be more proper to consider, as they occur, those arguments, by which Mr. E. proposes to prove it. He says, that the apostasy began in the days of the Apostles. He should have said, that it began with the Apostles themselves; that *they* set the example of the first act of such a species of apostasy, when they prayed to our Lord, as knowing the hearts of all men, to direct their choice in supplying the place of the traitor Judas; and Stephen, before his martyrdom, addressed our Saviour in language relative to the same opinion of his divinity. This was done not long after they had seen the same Jesus, whom they then called upon, ascend, in the human shape, into the heavens. This was not the adoration of a man long since dead, but a simple, plain, and recent testimony to his nature.

P. 35. *miracles are divested, &c.* The argument pursued by Mr. E. is in conformity with his hypothesis of an apostasy: he now attempts to shew that the delusion of the professors of Christianity, who apostatized, was effected by false miracles, "lying wonders," and "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness." He wishes to invalidate the testimony of eyewitnesses and historical evidence in general, by an appeal to certain facts, which he himself deems incredible. I therefore propose to examine the circumstances of their supposed incredibility.

^b Mr. E. has repeated more than one argument from Julian.

I. In his Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man, p. 7. he says, "Be so good then as to ask this Doctor of easy faith, whether he believes the African miracle, so strongly and judiciously stated by Mr. Gibbon, that a number of the orthodox, whose tongues their inhuman Arian antagonists had cut out, spoke distinctly and perfectly well, after that cruel operation, without any tongues at all?" And, p. 8. "He certainly, according to his own principles, ought to believe it; because the fact was attested by great numbers of eye and ear-witnesses, both in Africa and at Constantinople, whose testimony is recorded, not only in the writings of private individuals, but even in the public annals of the eastern empire." The completeness of this testimony makes the transaction worthy of a minute analysis. Mr. Gibbon, vol. vi. p. 295. calls the evidence of ^c Justinian "superfluous;" but it is not so to others: "Vidimus venerabiles viros qui abscissis radicibus linguis suas pœnas *miserabiliter* loquebantur." Justinian does not speak of it as a miracle, but merely as a specimen of the cruelty of the Vandals, who had subjugated Africa. ^d Victor Vitenfis refers the incredulous to "a surviving victim." If any one should doubt "of the truth, let him repair to Constantinople, and listen to the *clear* and *perfect* language of Restitutus, the subdeacon; one of these glorious sufferers, who is *now* lodged in the palace of the Emperor Zeno, and is respected by the devout Empress. This Victor "published a history of the persecution *within two years* after the event." ^e Æneas of Gaza, an eyewitness, says, "I saw them myself; I heard them speak; I diligently enquired by what means such an articulate voice could be formed *without any organ of*

^c Cod. lib. i. tit. 27.

^d Gibbon, vol. vi. p. 294.

^e Gibbon, vol. vi. p. 294.

speech:—I opened their mouth, and saw that the whole tongue had been completely torn away by the roots; an operation, which the physicians generally suppose to be mortal.” After all, this is not one of the specious miracles by which the African Catholics have defended the truth and justice of their cause,” and which is to be “ascribed with more reason to their own industry, than to the visible protection of heaven.” The only question was, whether the tongue is the only organ of speech; and it is not surprising, that it was determined in the fifth century, even by the most scientific enquirers, in the affirmative. They only ascertained, that the faculty of speech was not destroyed by a partial or entire excision of the tongue, as they regarded it. But they did not commit any fraud. They did not pretend that these victims spoke by any power committed to themselves. They did not concert any fictitious occurrences; and from the state of physical knowledge they did not conclude irrationally, nor ever dishonestly, that this was an example of a miracle. But they did not assume the credit of the event to themselves, as the instruments by whom it was performed. This excludes the odious insinuation of industry and fraud, and resolves itself into opinion and judgment.

II. § “Yet, Sir,” proceeds Mr. E. “the evidence of testimony to the truth of the miracle of Balaam’s ass is far less satisfactory. For, from the circumstances of the story, it does not appear that *any person was sensible of the fact* except Balaam and the ass herself; or, if the prophet’s servants, and the messengers of Balak, were also earwitnesses of the wonderful fact, they were very few indeed in comparison of those who

^f Gibbon, vol. vi. p. 293.

^g Letter to Dr. Priestley’s Young Man, p. 3.

“ attested the African miracle. Besides, they were all
 “ Midianites, or Moabites, who at that time were hostile
 “ to, and had no communication with the Jews. Yet
 “ it is a Jewish history alone in which that *singular* mi-
 “ racle is recorded.” To these cavils it may be briefly
 stated, 1. That, whether the number of witnesses were as
 great in one case as in another is not any part of the
 question, where credibility does not depend upon a num-
 ber of witnesses, nor less than a given number. 2. That
 Balaam’s two servants were with him, which is a suffi-
 cient provision of evidence, and not to be confounded
 with the absolute want of evidence. 3. That the place
 where it happened was “ a path of the vineyards ;” a
 public road lying between two walls. The “ vineyard
 “ of the man void of understanding” is described by So-
 lomon, Prov. xxiv. 30. as having “ the stone wall thereof
 “ broken down ;” of which kind, we have a right to sup-
 pose, was the hedge alluded to by the Psalmist, Ps. lxxx.
 12. “ Why hast thou then broken down her hedge, that
 “ *all they that go by* pluck off her grapes ?” The scene
 therefore of this occurrence was a common track of tra-
 vellers and passengers. 4. That the princes of Balak do
 not seem by the history to have been present when the
 angel met Balak, as the expostulation of the angel con-
 cludes with his saying, “ Go with the men.” 5. That it is
 of no use to surmise what would have been the testimony
 of persons, if they had witnessed a certain transaction.
 6. That although it is recorded in a Jewish history, yet
 we do not perceive that any Jewish interest could be pro-
 moted by such a fiction. 7. That the occasion, as far
 as we may presume to judge, was worthy of the inter-
 position. 8. That we are no judges whatever of the ap-
 parently inferior circumstances which the Almighty com-
 bines with the greater means that his wisdom thinks fit
 to employ. 9. That the narrative has no moral incon-

gruities or contradictions. 10. That, if it had been recorded by a writer of any other nation, it is probable that it would have been derived from the Jewish records. And lastly, that we could not have authority for the authenticity of other books of the same date, equal to that which we have for the authenticity of those of the Jews.

II. "Ask him," says Mr. E. "as a philosopher, whether he really believes that the sun and moon stood still at the command of Joshua?" the object of which he states to be "only to gratify the Jewish general with the pleasure of butchering his flying enemies twelve hours longer than daylight would have otherwise permitted him to enjoy." p. 9. I refer with pleasure to a very ingenious, and at the same time the most correct explanation of the object of this miracle, inserted in the Gentleman's Magazine for the month of January 1800. p. 25, 26. with the signature C. D. Mr. E. did not remember, that miracles of the Almighty were not designed for the conviction of the Jewish nation only, but also for warnings and proofs of his power and presence to neighbouring idolaters, worshippers possibly of those planets.

III. "Amongst the miraculous facts recorded in the Scriptures, there are some which a wary, reflecting, and unprejudiced mind might not unreasonably consider as only uncommon effects of human skill, or the mere illusions of what the ancients denominated the magic art, cunning artifice, and a kind of dexterous legerdemain. For the very same *evidence of testimony* which assures us of the miracles wrought by Moses to prevail upon Pharaoh to dismiss the Israelites, assures us likewise, that in the three first instances the Egyptian magicians performed the same; and therefore it is highly probable, that their king supposed Moses and Aaron to be only magicians of superior

“skill.” As I wish to abridge the discussion of these topics, and to avoid the repetition of the arguments of other writers, I shall briefly observe, 1. that, in candour, the same evidence of testimony should have received its proper appellation, the same history, and it should have been remarked, that the apparent success of the magicians in their attempts is recorded, as well as the miracles of Aaron. 2. Whatever might be the opinion of Pharaoh we cannot tell; but we know what the magicians themselves thought of the power by which Aaron performed those wonderful works, and they declared them to be done by the finger of God. 3. These miracles have the condition of credibility, and authenticity, and reality, which Mr. E. elsewhere assumes as necessary to establish the general authority of miracles; namely, a previous prophetic promise and specification.

Out of respect to Bishop Horsley’s memory, as a scholar, it may be proper to notice, although with a view to controvert, his opinion of these miracles performed by the magicians. He considers it (p. 238. vol. i.) “as an express trial of skill, if we may be allowed the expression, between Moses and the magicians of Egypt, in the exercise of miraculous powers, in which the magicians were completely foiled. They performed *some* miracles, but Moses performed many more and much greater.—Now whoever will allow that these things, done by the magicians, were miraculous, i. e. beyond the natural powers of man, must allow that they were done by some familiarity of these magicians with the devil, for they were done in express defiance of God’s power, they were done to discredit his messenger and to encourage the King of Ægypt to disregard the messenger.” pp. 239, 240. I dissent altogether from this view of these transactions. A trial of skill implies an independence of each of the contending powers; nor do I see

how any satisfaction is to result from the consideration of Moses having performed "more and greater miracles," while we are required to admit that, "by their familiarity with the devil," the magicians were able to perform *any* "in express defiance of God's power." Besides, Pharaoh does not apply to his own magicians, but to Moses and Aaron, for the removal of the frogs, which had been produced equally by the former. What is done in defiance of a certain power is seldom the same thing which that power effects and intends, and particularly when success would only aggravate the injury already inflicted by the adverse competitor. In such a case then the natural inference seems to be, that one agency controlled the other, and the magicians appear to have been compelled to be joint authors of the same miraculous calamities with which the Almighty had resolved to vindicate his omnipotence. A trial of skill suggests a very degrading notion of the ways of the Almighty, and tends, as I observed before, to elevate the power of the devil to that of an independent being, which is necessarily implied in a real competition.

IV. ^h "There are others, which might be suspected of being only the accidental effects of natural causes sagaciously observed, and artfully misrepresented as the immediate interposition of divine power, to answer the purposes of the chief actor of the history. Of this kind are the extraordinary flight of quails, the supply of manna, the destruction of Korah and his factious party, and *some others*."

This reasoning would be more specious, if the supply of manna had been temporary; but the children of Israel eat it during "forty years," a period rather too long for the continued and accidental operation of natural causes.

^h Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man, p. 9, 10.

In a similar manner, when the Israelites demanded again flesh to eat, the quails were again sent to satisfy their desire; and we may be allowed perhaps to argue from the assemblage of these animals in such vast bodies, that it was not an accidental effect of a natural cause: "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them," says Moses, "to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" Num. xi. 22. The repetition of one miracle, and the continuation of the other, not to mention how the prophetic particulars ascertained that the manna was the promised bread, obviate the cavil at once. The destruction of Korah was not an accidental earthquake, for Moses *predicted* this particular mode of destruction, and therefore the history is credible according to Mr. E's own criterion.

V. "Nay Josephus, though a Jew, labours to account for the passage of the Israelites through the Red sea by the favourable concurrence of natural circumstances, which happened at that time to occasion a temporary dry path in that part of the channel; and intimates that similar circumstances have been known repeatedly to produce similar effects, in other places, since the time of Moses." p. 10. It is a matter of curiosity to examine *how* Josephus "labours" to get rid of this miracle, and I willingly produce his mode of labouring for this purpose. "As soon therefore as ever the whole Ægyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent, raised by storms of wind, and encompassed the Ægyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightnings, with flashes of fire. Thunderbolts also were darted upon them. Nor was there any thing which is *usually sent by God* upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal night oppressed them." Now

after some expectation we prepare ourselves to analyze the circumstances, “ which have been known *repeatedly* to produce similar effects, in other places, since the time of Moses.” “ As for myself,” says Josephus, “ I have delivered every part of this history as I found it in the sacred books : nor let any one wonder at the strangeness of the narration, if a way were discovered to those men of old time, who were free from the wickedness of modern ages, whether it happened by the will of God, or whether it happened of its own accord ; while for the sake of those that accompanied Alexander King of Macedonia, who yet lived, comparatively, but a little while ago, the Pamphylia retired and afforded them a passage through itself, when they had no other way to go ; *I mean when it was the will of God to destroy the monarchy of the Persians* : and this is confessed to be true by all that have written about the actions of Alexander. *But as to these events, let every one determine as he pleases.*” There is an essential difference between the passage of the Israelites *through* the Red sea from one side to the other, and the march of Alexander along *the coast* of the sea of Pamphylia. I may add from Whiston’s note the account of the topography of this march according to Strabo : “ Now about Phaselis is *that narrow passage by the sea side, through which Alexander led his army.* There is a mountain called Climax, which adjoins to the sea of Pamphylia, leaving a narrow passage on the shore, which in calm weather is bare, so as to be passable by travellers ; but when the sea overflows, it is covered to a great degree by the waves. Now then, the ascent by the mountains being round about and steep, in still weather they make use of the road along the coast. But Alexander fell into the winter season, and committing himself chiefly to fortune, he marched on before the waves retired, and so it

“happened that they were a whole day in journeying over it, and were under water up to the navel.” Lib. xiv. p. 666. Arrian’s account is this; b. i. p. 72, 73. “When Alexander removed from Phafelis, he sent some part of his army over the mountains to Perga, which road the Thracians shewed him. A difficult way it was, but short. However, he himself conducted those that were with him *by the sea shore*. This road is impassable at any other time than when the north wind blows; but if the south wind prevail, *there is no passing by the shore*. Now at this time, after strong south winds, a north wind blew, and that not without the Divine Providence, (as both he and they that were with him supposed,) and afforded him an easy and quick passage.” Thus it seems that the word “repeatedly” designates *the single* instance adduced by Josephus; and so far is he from recurring to natural causes, that he considers Alexander as the agent of the Almighty, and assisted by Him in this particular difficulty; and thus endeavours, contrary to Mr. E’s supposition, to assimilate the case of Alexander to that of the Israelites, and not that of the Israelites to the transit of Alexander’s army.

V. The following objection I shall consider in a general view, and not in its application. “ⁱ Why, sir, young as you are, you must have learned from the four evangelical histories themselves, that to some of the miraculous facts they relate, the Apostles alone could be witnesses; that the most public of them could be seen only by part of the inhabitants of Palestine, chiefly in Galilee, or in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem: and that of those crowds who followed our Saviour, and were witnesses to many of his wonderful acts, whether

ⁱ Letter to Dr. Priestley’s Young Man, p. 11.

“ they consisted of thousands or of myriads, so very few
 “ were effectually convinced by them of the divine
 “ power and authority of his commission, that after his
 “ death the whole number of those who believed in him
 “ amounted only to one hundred and twenty, and of that
 “ small number many were dead before the year sixty-
 “ two, the date which Dr. P. allots for the publication of
 “ the earliest of those histories.” 1. Those miracles, which
 our Lord performed in the presence of the Apostles alone,
 were not performed for their advantage, nor had any
 other object, than the miracles of greater publicity.

2. The duration of our Saviour’s ministry for three, or
 three years and a half, allowed a sufficient space for the
 repetition of all his wondrous works, particularly if we
 consider that his whole employment consisted either of
 teaching, or working miracles. The evidence of the di-
 vinity of our Lord’s mission would not have been incom-
 plete, even if his most public miracles could have been
 seen only by a part of the inhabitants of Palestine, chiefly
 in Galilee, or in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. But
 how are we to learn, which were his *most* public miracles,
 when so small a part of them is preserved in description ?
 Or, can we suppose that there was such a gradation of
 publicity as would affect the sufficiency or validity of this
 evidence ?

3. We are not any where informed, what numbers of
 people believed in our Lord’s mission. To say that there
 were only one hundred and twenty that were to be found
 after his death, is not warranted by the passage in the
 Acts, i. 15. where the number of disciples is said to
 be “ about an hundred and twenty names.” Are we to
 infer, that this was the amount of all the believers
 throughout all the tract of country, where our Lord had
 been teaching ; or, can we again suppose, that all who
 believed every where had immediately after the death of

our Saviour repaired to Jerusalem, and joined themselves to the Apostles? Yet these assumptions are all necessary for Mr. E's argument.

4. Mr. E. proceeds to state, ^k "that the most important of all the miracles of the Gospel, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead, we are expressly told by an Apostle himself, was not manifested to the people in general, but only to a *few* chosen witnesses, who eat and drank, and conversed with him for many days after his resurrection to life." The witnesses were "chosen" indeed, but not "few." Our Lord did not appear "to all the people," but "he appeared to five hundred brethren at once," which ought to make some difference in Mr. E's computation of the numbers of believers after our Lord's death. I am ready to allow, that Mr. E. has received the miracles above referred to, which might be explained away by "reflecting, and wary, and unprejudiced minds," on the authority of preceding predictions. But was Pharaoh, who might have had a mind of this description, acquainted with these predictions? It does not appear that he was, nor is his criminal obduracy said in Scripture to be aggravated by resisting the evidence of prophecy as well as of miracles; indeed his obstinacy would not be accounted as criminal in any degree, unless the necessary knowledge of the previous prediction had been communicated to him. I argued in a preceding note on the credibility of the miracles without prophecy.

P. 79. *had been acquainted.* I had inadvertently adopted the sense of this passage of Tertullian as given by Dr. Priestley. I believe Mr. E's to be more correct, but it does not amount to "the writer's personal knowledge."

^k Letter to Dr. Priestley's Young Man, p. 12,

I shall transcribe not merely the story, but the reasoning likewise of Tertullian. "*Dividetur autem mors, si et anima, superfluo scilicet animæ quandoque morituro: ita portio mortis cum animæ portione remanebit. Nec ignoro aliquod esse vestigium opinionis istius. De meo didici. Scio feminam quandam vernaculam Ecclesiæ, forma et ætate integra functam, post unicum et breve matrimonium, cum in pace dormisset, et morante adhuc sepultura, interim oratione presbyteri componeretur, ad primum halitum orationis manus a lateribus dimotas in habitum supplicem conformasse, rursusque condita pace, fitui suo reddidisse. Est et alia relatio apud nostros,*" which shews that the other was a current anecdote also. "*In cæmeterio corpus corpori iuxta collocando spatium recessu communicasse.*" This is the whole of Mr. E's extract. I shall rest the question of Tertullian's credulity on the reasoning which he immediately subjoins. "*Si et apud ethnicos tale quid traditur, ubique Deus potestatis suæ signa proponit, suis in solatium, extraneis in testimonium. Magis enim credam ex Deo factum, quam ex ullis animæ reliquiis: quæ si inessent, alia quoque membra movissent, et si manus tantum, sed non in causam orationis. Corpus etiam illud non modo fratri cessisset, verum et alias, mutatione situs sibi ipse refrigerasset.*" This last explanation, it should be remembered, is founded on the notion, that *all* life was not extinguished, and therefore not sensation. He is however dissatisfied with what he had said. "*Certe unde unde sunt ista, signis potius et portentis deputanda, naturam facere non possunt: mors, si non semel tota est, non est: si quid vitæ remanserit, vita est: non magis vitæ miscbitur mors, quam diei nox.*" De Anima, 51.

P. 96. *Clement of Alexandria.* "Possimus," says Le

Clerc in his third Dissertation subjoined to his Harmony, "hic subjicere exempla Clementis Alexandrini utentis libris apocryphis, non aliter ac Apostolicis; iis temporibus, quibus sat notum erat utrorumque discrimen, nec æqualis auctoritas." p. 543. I think I have shewn, that he has not unduly raised the one, nor depressed the other.

P. 125. *Could not have been distinguished.* Mr. E. seems to exult in "the concessions which Le Clerc himself was forced to make concerning the great number of undistinguishable fictitious books, falsely attributed to the Apostles and their followers in the very first age¹." I had some curiosity to examine these concessions. Dodwell observes, as cited by Le Clerc, p. 541. that before the time of Trajan the canon of the sacred books was not yet determined, nor any certain number of books received in the Catholic church. Le Clerc concedes, "that no synod consisting of members either of all or many Christian churches had, at this period, made any decision on this subject." And I have elsewhere suggested some reasons for regarding this silence, as advantageous to Christianity. Dodwell also argues, that the true apostolic writings were so bound up together, in the same volumes, with apocryphal works, that it did not appear by any mark or public censure of the church, which of them were to be preferred. Le Clerc concedes, that sometimes the writings of Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, and others were conjoined with the books of the Apostles; but it is not yet clear to him, that this was done in the apostolic age: and of this combination he again thus expresses himself; I am unwilling to suppose this of the disciples of the Apostles, who had received the Gospel from their mouth and their writings.

¹ Letter to Dr. Priefley's Young Man, p. 42.

Another concession of Le Clerc's, but imperfectly made, may be produced. If I should concede, that Clement (of Rome) had not read all the Gospels, nothing could be inferred against my opinion, if that epistle were written sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem, as many suppose, or a short time after the appearance of the Gospels. For then he could not have seen any Gospel, except that of St. Luke, which he commends. The most important of all the concessions is that where he says he could produce instances of citations by Clement of Alexandria from apocryphal books, of which he made the same use as those of the Apostles; "*utentis libris apocryphis, non aliter ac Apostolicis:*" but he does not admit that this was done because the distinction was not known, or acknowledged, because he adds, "*iis temporibus, quibus sat notum erat utrorumque discrimen, nec æqualis auctoritas.*" The use therefore which Le Clerc says that Clement made of these books, must be interpreted with a reference to the above conclusion of the sentence. Such then are the concessions of Le Clerc, which might be described in less sanguine expressions by Mr. E. than as such as he "*was forced to make concerning the great number of undistinguishable fictitious books, falsely attributed to the Apostles and their followers in the very first age.*"

P. 177. *St. Matthew's Gospel.* It was my original intention to examine such parts of "*The Diffonance*" in these notes, as could not be reduced under the general topics, which I had selected for examination in the Lectures, or would have enlarged each discourse to an inconvenient length for delivery. I therefore take this opportunity of introducing some of these supplementary remarks on the objections of Mr. E. to the Gospels in ge-

neral. With regard to the demoniac of Gadara, mentioned by St. Luke, "there appear to occur still stronger objections against it from the history itself: and such as may well warrant a conclusion that the whole passage was interpolated in the second century. For in the preceding part of Luke's narrative we find our Lord was at Capernaum, on the western side of the lake or sea of Galilee, and in the eighth chapter he takes ship with his disciples to go unto the other side of the lake, without doubt to preach the Gospel to those parts of Palestine which were situated on the eastern side: but, according to this most extraordinary story of the demoniac and the herd of swine, almost as soon as he was landed on the eastern shore, the Gadarenes, terrified and alarmed by the injurious though miraculous destruction of their swine, entreated him to leave their coasts; and he accordingly went up into the ship, and returned back again to Capernaum. In Galilee therefore, on the western side of the lake, he ought to be found in the following part of the history: yet in the very next chapter we are plainly told, without the slightest insinuation of his having crossed the lake again, that he was on the eastern side of the lake; for from thence he sent out his twelve Apostles, and thither they returned to him again, because, immediately on their return, he took them aside into a desert place belonging to the city Bethsaida, which, we learn from Josephus, who, having had the command of the forces of the Jews in that district, must have been perfectly acquainted with the situation of every town upon the lake, was on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee. If then this *very exceptionable* miracle be an interpolation, and not part of the original writing of St. Luke, the narrative proceeds consistently and regularly: but, if it be taken as au-

“thentic, there is such a geographical confusion and disorder in this part of the history, as occurs no where else in this author’s works^m.” Cellarius considers this as one of the most difficult questions in sacred geography; and his doubts induced Reland to examine what mode could be adopted of reconciling the Evangelists with Josephus. Reland apologizes for having recourse to the supposition, that there were two places of the name of Bethsaida, on different sides of the lake of Genesareth, because it is one of the most trite solutions of similar cases among geographical writers. Macknight, in the Commentary on his Harmony, p. 256, says, that “this city therefore, being in Philip’s jurisdiction, must have stood somewhere to the east of Jordan. Josephus has marked its situation distinctly, Bell. iii. 18. where he tells us, that the river Jordan falls into the lake Genesareth behind the city Julias,” or Bethsaida, the name by which it was dignified by Philip the tetrarch. “All the circumstances mentioned in the Gospels, which have any relation to Bethsaida, quadrate exactly with this situation of it.” It is necessary to observe, that Galilee on this side the river Jordan, the lower Gaulonitis, and Peræa on the other, however various places in these tracts might be assigned to various persons in the fluctuating distribution of tetrarchies or toparchies under the Roman emperors, did not undergo any change with respect to their several boundaries. St. John calls Bethsaida, Bethsaida of Galilee, as if it were to distinguish it from another in a different district. The Bethsaida of Josephus was in Gaulonitis, on the other side of the river Jordan. Macknight wishes to reconcile the two by suggesting, “that Bethsaida being situated hard by the Jordan which according to Josephus divided Galilee from Gaulonitis,

^m Diffon. pp. 47, 48.

“it might be called a town of either country. Perhaps it belonged sometimes to the one, and sometimes to the other.” Of this there is no evidence. Nor is the subsequent reason to be admitted. “Farther; although when Josephus wrote Galilee did not extend beyond Jordan, the boundary of Herod’s dominions, the Scriptures give the name of Galilee to the whole region lying north of the sea, (Matth. iv. 13—15.) and particularly to the tract which Josephus names Gaulonitis; for, Acts v. 37. Gamaliel calls him Judas of Galilee, whom Josephus names Judas Gaulonitis. Nay the latter calls him sometimes Judas of Galilee.” All that can be inferred from the coincidence of the two writers is, that they had the same reason for calling him Judas of Galilee, not that the sacred writers give the name of Galilee to the tract which Josephus distinguishes by the name Gaulonitis. Hudson ingeniously intimates in a note, page 792, that Judas might receive a double appellation, one from the place of his birth, and the other from the place of his education, or residence. Aldrich, Hist. Joseph. p. 1060. is persuaded, that the first passage is corrupt in which Judas is described as a Gaulonite from the city Gamala, and remarks, that there was a Gamala in Galilee as well as in Gaulonitis; but this correction is surely unnecessary. There is no necessity for disturbing the geography of Josephus to such an extent, when a man, who changes his abode, may naturally derive a local designation from the place where he either passed the greatest part of his life, or where he most distinguished himself by certain actions, without any reference to the length of the period during which he remained there. Since however Macknight has affirmed, that the collocation of Bethsaida upon the eastern side of the lake of Galilee quadrates exactly “with all the circumstances mentioned in the Gospels which have any relation to it,” it is proper to examine the

passages from which its true situation can be collected. Our Saviour passed twice from the eastern side of the lake to Bethsaida, directly. It is worthy of attention to observe by what track, upon another occasion, he arrived on that side of the lake.^a He first departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and then directed his course to the sea of Galilee; but St. Mark informs us, that it was "through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis." He then took ship and came into the "coasts of Magdala," or, according to St. Mark, "into the parts of Dalmanutha," on the western border of the sea of Galilee. He then returned with his disciples to the eastern side, and repeated the miracle of the provision of food for the multitude. St. Mark is the only Evangelist that notices his subsequent removal to Bethsaida: "And he cometh to Bethsaida." I shall pursue the line of our Saviour's journeying from this point, although it is a digression from the argument. We next find our Saviour, in the accounts both of St. Matthew and St. Mark, in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, which will accord very well with the return to Bethsaida. At this time it was that he "abode" with his disciples "in Galilee;" that "they passed through Galilee," or traversed a large tract of that country, and "would not that any man should know it," as St. Mark adds; and St. John (ch. vii. 1.) relates, that "after these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews fought to kill him." It is on his return to the south from the upper parts of Galilee that we find him again at Capernaum, which place he left, and "departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan," the Peræa. After some stay in this district, he afterwards, as his time approached, journeyed towards

^a See the map of Palestine in D'Anville.

Jerusalem. The brief expressions of St. Mark, "and he cometh to Bethsaida," may be best explained by a previous account of our Saviour's crossing the lake to the same place. St. Matthew (ch. xiv. 22.) has not given all the particulars; and it may be useful to compare the less full with the more enlarged detail. "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennefaret." St. Mark inserts some material information, "to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida." "And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennefaret, and drew to shore." This testimony places Bethsaida not only in Galilee, but in the land of Gennefaret, the *ager Gennefareticus*. Macknight therefore seems to be incorrect in his chorography, when he refers every transaction connected with Bethsaida to the eastern side of the lake; and the Evangelists had as much reason to speak of Bethsaida of Galilee, as Josephus had to notice that in Gaulonitis.

P. 147. *copyists*. Mr. E. proceeds to observe°, that "if the plain express dictates of the Lord Jesus himself could not escape free from material alterations and additions, by the pens of copyists of these books in the third, fourth, or fifth centuries, what other parts of them can we suppose secure from their daring interpolations, whenever they hoped to serve by them the cause of their particular religious system?" The prayer dictated by our Lord to his disciples, as preserved by St. Luke, is said to be "interpolated out of the Gospel called Matthew's;" and the authority of Griesbach is

° Diffonance, p. 53.

adduced for this assertion. I think the word *interpolation* is a very harsh one; and it is used by Griesbach, as well as by Mr. E. They are not additions flowing from the imagination of the copyist, and should therefore be distinguished from the produce of human invention, directed to a certain object and purpose. I do not understand how "the cause of their particular religious system" could be served by transferring to St. Luke the words which "assign a local habitation to God in heaven," or those which contain the petition for deliverance from the evil one. It is not remarked by Mr. E. that "the learned and diligent" Griesbach did not discover any reason for rejecting these same clauses from the prayer, as recorded by St. Matthew. Mr. E. rejects, on the ground of "the evangelical history of St. Luke being made more conformable to that attributed to Matthew by the same copyists," the baptism of Jesus, "his forty days fasting, his temptation, and the transfiguration." I hope I may be excused, if, having observed that the arbitrary assignment of motives to these unknown copyists is not supported by any proof, I merely shew how Mr. E. would have proceeded, had he belonged to this association of ancient transcribers. "It well deserves our notice," says Mr. E. (Diffonance, p. 55.) "that *if we pass from* the account of John's imprisonment by Herod, Luke iii. 20. to iv. 14. *and read*, 'Then came Jesus,' *instead of* 'And Jesus returned,' the histories both of John and Jesus proceed *regularly*, and in order." This admirer of Griesbach will not find any various reading in this passage. The word *ἰνὲ σιδήρῳ* is written "with an iron pen and lead, in the rock, for ever." Mr. E. has explained his own system, and we see how he can audaciously disfigure by mutilation, in the face of that same criticism, whose assistance he can so complacently use, when in his own favour, the latter periods of the history of the chosen

people of God, and of the divine Author and Finisher of a new dispensation, under the imposing objection of want of probability, or consistent connection; but in reality, because it is irreducible, when entire, to his views of orthodox Socinianism. It is not however intended to substitute this remark in the place of an examination of the reasons for rejecting the history of the baptism of our Saviour. "With what propriety," it is asked, p. 56. "could he, who knew no sin, receive such a baptism? or, the destined Messiah attend the preaching of his own precursor, to be prepared by him for the coming of himself?" The Baptist himself, well knowing that his own was a baptism unto repentance, hesitated in complying with the intention of our Lord, who came in order to be baptized by him; "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Our Lord did not explain himself further than by replying, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." This is all the satisfaction which Mr. E.'s question can receive. In what Gospel did Mr. E. learn that our Lord "attended the preaching of his own precursor?" It is sufficient to expose *this interpolation* of the scoffer himself, nor is it necessary to repel otherwise the deistical mockery with which the object of that attendance is expressed. "And what probability," continues he, "is there, that our Lord would have studiously avoided calling himself 'the Son of God' during his whole ministry, and forbidden his disciples before his death to announce him as such to the Jews, if God had miraculously declared him to be so by a voice from heaven, in the audience of so great a multitude?" I was prepared to speak harshly of the assertion, that our Lord was baptized in the presence of a great multitude, and that a great multitude heard the voice from heaven; but I restrained my dissent within other limits, when I

observed that the able author of "Illustrations of the Gospels," Mr. Jones, has spoken twice of the presence of a multitude upon this occasion, p. 38. and 359. The language of the Evangelist does not seem to authorize such an interpretation. St. Luke says, iii. 21. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also, being baptized, and praying, &c." The original is, ἐν τῷ βαπτισθῆναι ἅπαντα τὸν λαόν : but these expressions do not imply that this multitude was present when our Saviour prayed. My objections to the above supposition are these : 1. It weakens the testimony of the Baptist, "And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." 2. St. John alone was prepared by prophecy to recognize our Lord ; "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." 3. Would our Saviour have prayed, contrary to his subsequent practice and injunctions, not in secret, but before a great multitude ? 4. But even supposing that a multitude were present, they were probably ignorant of the character of the person who was baptized. "I baptize with water," said the Baptist to the enquiring Pharisees ; "but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not ;" and he repeats it of himself, so as to attract attention ; "and I knew him not." And with a reference to this circumstance I imagine these words are to be explained : "but that he should be made manifest unto Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." The manifestation to Israel did not consist in receiving the rite of baptism publicly, but in the record of John respecting the nature of the person who was baptized, which had been previously declared to him by the Spirit, and had been con-

firmed by the voice from heaven. Mr. E. continues, that our Lord forbade his disciples, before his death, to announce him as the Son of God to the Jews. St. Luke has given this as a reason of the injunction of silence at this time, which our opponent would extend to every subsequent period. "He straitly charged and commanded them to tell no man that thing, saying, 'The Son of man must suffer many things, &c.'" He knew what effect such a communication would have as the period of his death approached, and, at the time of this conversation with his disciples, he was on his way to the north of Galilee, in order that he might avoid those who sought to kill him, before all things were accomplished. He did not enjoin silence on this subject as relative to particulars that were not true, or indifferent, but the declaration of which at this juncture would have accelerated an event, which had its appropriate season. There is an exception to the remaining assertion, that our Lord "studiously avoided calling himself the Son of God during *his whole ministry*" in the miraculous restoration of sight to the man who was born blind. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" was our Saviour's question. "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee," was the unambiguous language in which he asserted the union of both natures. The "account of the transfiguration is so directly contradictory to the repeated doctrine of the Gospel, that 'Jesus was the first man whom God raised from the dead, that it *cannot be a true authentic story*. For, whatever may be thought of Elias, Moses, we are expressly assured, died and was buried: if therefore he was alive in the reign of Tiberius, and visited our Saviour on the mount, Moses, and not Jesus, must have

“been the first fruits from the dead^a.” This is not any instance of a resurrection from the dead. Moses indeed died, and was buried: but is there any reason to conclude from this vision, as it is called, that this appearance at the transfiguration was either in the place of a resurrection, or the consequence of it? Mr. E. next objects to the whole of the two first chapters of St. Luke’s Gospel. One improbability in his opinion is, that “angels, like men, should be distinguished from each other by proper names.” To this it certainly is not easy to give a direct answer, except indeed that no one person is furnished with any peculiar information respecting the nature of this order of beings. It is however not repugnant to our conceptions to suppose, that as the angels are not perfect, their allotted places and functions, as ministers of the Almighty, may necessarily be denoted relatively to their own capacities by certain names; at least these names may have a relation to the persons to whom they have been occasionally directed to communicate the will of God. I must also observe, that although the angel predict a miracle, which was accomplished, yet this conformity to the criterion of credible miracles has not restrained Mr. E. from rejecting the account as a forgery. I willingly transcribe the reasoning on this miracle from a very able letter to Mr. Stone, by the Rev. E. Nares, p. 26. “But, Sir, if you doubt the veracity of Mary and Joseph, from the extreme privacy of the transactions, why doubt the vision of Zacharias, so immediately connected with them in all its circumstances? This, if it happened in private, was yet attended with circumstances of considerable publicity. For though, indeed, it was in the inner part of the synagogue that the angel appeared to Zacha-

^a Diffonance, p. 57.

"rias, yet 'the whole multitude of the people' was
 "praying just without; and, after an impatient expecta-
 "tion of his appearance, the instant he came forth, it
 "was the people in waiting who discovered, by his
 "looks and manner, that he had seen a vision. What
 "say you, Sir, to this annunciation? Remember the
 "two visions (or miracles, if you please, for the truth
 "of the latter depends on the former) are closely con-
 "nected, and cannot indeed be separated: and mark
 "the character of Zacharias; he was not only a good
 "man, and righteous before God, but he was by no
 "means a credulous man; the reverse indeed to a fault,
 "v. 20." It may be added, that he was to remain ju-
 "dicially dumb "until the day that these things" were
 "performed;" so that the continuance of the miracle ve-
 "rified the antecedency and reality of the prediction to
 others, who were not spectators of the effect, as soon as
 it was produced. Dr. Priestley, in his Letter to a
 Young Man, p. 47. says, that Mr. E. has "suggested
 "several new and valuable arguments against the mira-
 "culous conception, for which I and others think our-
 "selves greatly obliged to him." Some of these we are
 next to examine. Mr. E. objects to the designation of
 Elizabeth as "not only of the tribe of Levi, but of the
 "daughters of Aaron," because "*it is in the highest de-
 "gree improbable*" that the Levites, and "more espe-
 "cially the family of Aaron, who were separated from
 "all the other tribes and families, and peculiarly sancti-
 "fied and appropriated to the rites and offices of their
 "religion," should "intermarry with any other tribe."
 The fact, even without much consideration, appears to
 be this; that a female descendant of a Levite married
 into another Levite family, for Elizabeth certainly did
 not marry into another tribe, because Zacharias, as a

priest, must have been of that of Levi. But "the family of Aaron" was "separated from all other tribes and families." Zacharias is expressly said to be of "the course of Abia;" and how did it happen that he was of this course, unless he also had been a son of Aaron? The sons of Aaron were divided into the four and twenty courses. "These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the Lord, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded him, 1 Chron. xxiv. 19." It will be said, that no mention is made of the return of the family of Abia from captivity. That may be; but still there was less danger of confusion among the sacerdotal families, than among any others. Since however St. Luke specifies the course of Abia, the courses of the services of the priests must have been restored after the captivity; and if Zacharias had his place in that of Abia, we may presume that there was as valid a reason for supposing that he was one of the descendants of Aaron, to whom these courses were peculiarly assigned, as there was for asserting that Elizabeth's descent was from the head of the same family. If I may not be permitted to suppose this part of the chapter to be genuine, its want of authority does not arise at least from the inconsistency imputed by Mr. E. There is another improbability of Mr. E's, which I shall leave with nearly an unreserved acknowledgment of my ignorance. "Neither is it at all probable," says he, "that the providence of the Almighty should destine the Jewish prophecies respecting the Messiah and his precursor to be accomplished in two persons, related by consanguinity to each other." As brevity is my object, I wish merely to observe, that there is one decisive circumstance to which we may appeal, that was subversive of any benefits to be expected from

such a petty association of confederate relatives. The ministry of the Baptist terminated before any utility could result from such an union of interests, and before any private or secular objects of the individuals themselves, if it were possible for such to have existed, could be promoted. We have next an instance of the facility with which Mr. E. rejects his own canons of sufficient or insufficient evidence of the credibility of miracles, in impugning the account of St. John, in which he records the testimony of the Baptist respecting our Saviour. Mr. E. avers, and argues at some length, that the Baptist knew our Saviour by traditions and anecdotes preserved in his own family, while the Scriptures declare that he was prophetically instructed how to distinguish him from other persons, who resorted to his baptism. I pass on to another inconsistency alledged by Mr. E. between the cause assigned in the account of the annunciation of the birth of our Saviour, why he should "be called the Son of God," and that which the Apostles adduce, who, he says, do not refer to any circumstances of his carnal birth, but to his being raised from the dead "to a new and spiritual life, by the immediate power of the Almighty;" and he adds, that "St. Luke, as if he meant directly to contradict the heavenly annunciator, *except in the acclamations of some lunatics*, never once mentions him by any other appellation than the Son of Man, or Son of David, till after his resurrection. *Then indeed he speaks of him as being commonly and publicly called the Son of God.*" I only remark, that the question is here artfully examined, as if it related only to the date of the acquisition of a name, and not to that of the assumption of a certain nature. It is somewhat remarkable, that these lunatics should accidentally have anticipated the application of a title to our Saviour, which, according to this theory, originated

in the subsequent event of the resurrection. Did these lunatics foresee this event, and the introduction of a new designation of our Saviour? The testimony of these lunatics, as they are called, is too singular a fiction for ordinary fabricators. The more frequent use of this name by the Apostles after the resurrection is to be ascribed to another cause. The testimony to our Lord's nature was then perfected, and the exclamations both of the demoniacs, and of St. Peter, were anticipations of the conclusion, which would indeed naturally follow, from the view of the whole of our Saviour's life, but which was premature at the periods of his ministry, when these declarations were made, and before all the Scriptures concerning him could be fulfilled. The intention of the passages which succeed, relative to "our Lord's examination before the Jewish council," has been so ably examined in a work, entitled, "An Illustration of the Method of explaining the New Testament by the early opinions of Jews and Christians concerning Christ, by W. Wilson, B. D. Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, 1797," that I could only repeat what I find there, and this repetition is contrary to my design. Dr. Horsley's book in reply to Dr. Priestley has been termed a model of controversy. I think that it has only a third place; the two former may be justly assigned to Dr. Burgh and Mr. Wilson. Passing forwards to another objection of Mr. E's, which, from its brevity and portable form, rather than from its importance, merits notice, we see it seriously advanced, though not professedly insisted upon, that there is an inconsistency in the stories the two first chapters of St. Luke contain "of the Prophet Simeon and the Prophetess Anna, with the well known historic truth, that there never was a prophet amongst the Jews from the time of their return from their captivity to the preaching

“ of John the Baptist.” There was no prophet, whose predictions were said to be committed to writing, nor perhaps whose office it was to utter predictions, if any such there were, which were not recorded; but the name of prophet must have belonged to many in the Jewish polity, to whom the events of futurity were never revealed. Still however, when the Almighty vouchsafed to make known his purposes, they were usually, as occasion required, communicated to his people through persons of this class. To these remarks may be subjoined an extract from Dr. Horsley’s first sermon on the subject of prophecy. “ Under this name,” he observes, “ is not “ to be included every thing that might be uttered by a “ prophet, even under the divine impulse; but the word “ is to be taken strictly for that which was the highest “ part of the prophetic office, the prediction of the “ events of distant ages. The prophets spake under the “ influence of the Spirit upon various occasions, when “ they had no such predictions to deliver. They were, “ in the Jewish church, the ordinary preachers of righteousness; and their lessons of morality and religion, “ though often conveyed in the figured strains of poetry, “ were abundantly perspicuous. They were occasionally “ sent to advise public measures in certain critical situations of the Jewish state. Sometimes they gave warning of impending judgments, or notice of approaching mercies, and sometimes they were employed to rebuke the vices, and to declare the destiny, of individuals. What they had to utter upon these occasions “ had sometimes, perhaps, no immediate connection with “ prophecy, properly so called; and the mind of the “ prophet seems to have been very differently affected “ with these subjects, and with the visions of futurity.”

P. 18, 19. vol. ii.

It is a curious, although not an agreeable employment,

to follow Mr. E. in his application of certain prophecies in St. Luke respecting the church. He remarks, that in the fifth chapter, verse 35. the humiliated, suffering, and afflicted state of the Christian church is delineated by the fasting of our Saviour's disciples after the bridegroom was taken away; but that the orthodox church, established by Constantine "hath experienced none of these prophetic marks of the true disciples of Christ, "that she hath wantoned in the enjoyment of temporal "honours, opulence, and power;" and "that she hath "been the chief means of accomplishing these prophecies upon the *conscientious disciples of Jesus* and his "Apostles by the confiscation of their property, the imprisonment and punishment of their bodies, the deprivation, in numberless cases, of their lives, and, in all, "of their natural rights as men, and denizens of their "native countries;" and that "the predicted period of "her presumptuous triumph, and of their own state of "degradation and oppression, hastens fast to its conclusion." My reader will be satisfied with one additional specimen of the interpretation of prophecy. The progress of the Gospel is compared in the thirteenth chapter of Luke to a small seed gradually becoming a large tree, and to a small portion of leaven pervading the kneaded mass. Hence Mr. E. reasons, that as the tree cannot decrease in magnitude, nor the mass become unleavened, so the Gospel, when once established, cannot be supplanted. "On the credit of these prophetic similitudes," he says, "we may pronounce with certainty, that the "religion, which spread so rapidly in the third and "fourth centuries, was not the religion of the Gospel, "of Christ, because it was superseded by the Mahomedan superstition." We are also informed, that there is sufficient "reason for God's so conspicuously declaring "his preference of the Mahomedan to the orthodox

“superstition.” The causes of this preference are stated to be, the prevention of idolatry by inculcating the unity of the Deity, and the improvement of morality by prohibiting in the Koran the use of strong drink; “whereas in Christendom the constant copious use, and “very frequent, intemperate, and excessive abuse of “fermented liquors,” now mark the new conclusion, “has effects fatally pernicious to the bodily health “and morals of its inhabitants.” This effect is as strongly admonitory of the impropriety of this indulgence, as any precept in the Koran. But what is the reason, why the superstitious drunken believer of the church of Constantine drinks on without any attention to these effects on his health and morals? It is, gentle reader, because he believes in the doctrine of the Atonement; and observe, whether we do not correctly draw our conclusion from this extract. “It is true, the orthodox “church preaches the pure ethics of the Gospel, and “*the virtue of temperance amongst the rest: but she has,* “*at the same time,* ingeniously and impiously contrived to “render her own, and, what is still worse, all the preaching of the Gospel of none effect, by her doctrine of the “death of Jesus, considered as a propitiatory sacrifice of “infinite efficacy, and an universal atonement for sin^b.” I do not think it necessary to examine all the reasoning on prophecy, but shall content myself with making a few remarks on Mr. E.’s objection to the sign of the Prophet Jonas, and to the first two chapters of the book inscribed with his name. “Whosoever,” he says, “compares the geographical situation of Nineveh with respect to the Mediterranean sea, will be convinced, that “nothing transacted upon that sea could fall under the “notice of the inhabitants of Nineveh, nor, consequently,

^b Diffonance, p. 109.

“be any sign to them at all.” That the inhabitants of Nineveh could not see from their city to the Mediterranean, does not require abundance of geographical proof. The miracle was of a personal nature, and intended as a judicial punishment of the Prophet’s disobedience. He was commanded to repair to Nineveh, and he designed to avoid the mission by embarking at Joppa in a vessel bound to Tarshish. In their course to this place, but at what distance from Joppa the history does not inform us, the tempest arose, which was appeased by the supposed death of the Prophet. If by any accident the Ninevites could have questioned the idolatrous mariners respecting the story of Jonas, they could only have related, “that they took on board at Joppa a stranger; that a storm arose, which, after their custom, they proceeded to appease by a trial of lots, which among their number should be cast into the water; that the lot fell upon this stranger, who, as he told them, was a Hebrew; that he acknowledged how justly it was thus determined that he should die, but that they afterwards continued to attempt to reach the land by rowing, but to no purpose; that they at length cast the Hebrew into the sea, and saw him no more.” Can we imagine that the Ninevites were less curious than the mariners, who enquired of Jonas, “What is thine occupation, and whence comest thou? What is thy country, and of what people art thou?” Would Jonas have waited for such an enquiry? Would he have been received without any other credentials of his authoritative warning than the mere subject of his preaching? Would he forbear to tell them the consequence to himself of his first refusal to come to their city? The history is most beautifully related, and has every character of credibility which nature can give to it; and her testimony in this, as in

many other instances, affords a sufficient preponderance against all the reason contained in the argument of the Deist.

P. 171. note. "the study of geometry." I request the reader to estimate the candour of the Author of the Free Enquiry into the authenticity of the first and second Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, when he affirms, "what is worthy of remark, they will find, that it was not unusual in those days, i. e. in the second century, to call any man a heretic, who excelled in, or studied philosophy, logic, geometry." P. 32. first edit.

P. 177. "Two first chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel." Michaelis remarks: "But were the objection unanswerable, it would affect, not the New Testament in general, but merely the two first chapters of St. Matthew, which may be separated from the rest of the Gospel; because it is *still* a question, whether they belong to it or not." P. 50. vol. i. The reasons why such a fact should yet remain questionable may be, either that our information respecting it is very scanty, or that the whole of it has not hitherto been collected, or that it is so obscure that it will not admit an uniformity of conclusion. The facts are few and simple, and relate, as we may divide them, to the genealogy, or either to the two first chapters of St. Matthew. We have the testimony of Epiphanius, that the Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew contained the genealogy, and it is at present found in all the Greek MSS. with the exception of one, which is imperfect. We have the testimony of Epiphanius likewise, that the Hebrew stemmata according to Matthew were either the genealogy detached, or a name for the whole Gospel, but more

probably the former. To trace the formation of arguments is sometimes to refute them; and I shall try this experiment upon some of those in the Free Enquiry, as I am not acquainted with any reply to that book. "It was necessary," says the Author, "to give some account of the particular sentiments held by these ancient sects of Christians, because they received a copy of St. Matthew's Gospel which had not the genealogy, or indeed, by all that appears, either the first or second chapters." p. 33. The Cerinthians received that part of the Gospel of St. Matthew which contained the genealogy, and they received it for that very reason, as Lardner has proved by comparing the words of Epiphanius in this passage with what he relates of Carpocrates. The portion which they rejected is not specified. The Ebionites "used a gospel," it is alledged, "which began with these words: 'It came to pass in the days of Herod, King of Judæa, &c.' From hence it appears, that the Gospel of St. Matthew, which they received, began at what now is called the third chapter." p. 37. Free Enquiry. "Epiphanius," says Lardner, "informs us that the gospel of the Ebionites begins thus: 'It came to pass, &c.' And he there says expressly, that their gospel called according to Matthew is 'defective and corrupted.' It is true indeed that Epiphanius does say this: 'Ὁρα δὲ—ὡς πάντα χωλὰ, λοξὰ, καὶ ἑτερομύλην ὁμοδόγητα ἔχοντα,' but he says more. Carpocrates and Cerinthus, he says, used the same gospel as the Ebionites, and "with to shew from the *beginning of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, by means of the genealogy*, that Christ sprung from the seed of Joseph and Mary. But these persons (the Ebionites) have other opinions; for, having cut away the descents in Matthew, they begin as I have before mentioned;" ἀρχόνται τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιῆσαι is the language of the origi-

nal. This testimony respecting the practices of the Ebionites will not justify any writer in merely declaring that their Gospel began in such a manner, because the question is, in what state the sect received it from others, not what particulars they themselves erased or inserted. It is useful indeed to know the date of these alterations, but we might on the same principle take the Gospel of the Evanfonians, consisting of one mutilated book, as authority for an ancient Gospel existing in the 19th century. The author of the Free Enquiry asserts, that "we have *undoubted* evidence that they (the descents) were "*wanting* in some very ancient copies of St. Matthew, "which were reckoned of considerable authority. Mr. Toland in his Nazarenus mentions an Irish copy of this "Gospel that he had seen, which had not the genealogy, "for it began at verse 18." Upon referring to Toland's Nazarenus, which I had not an opportunity of examining till I wrote this note, I observe, that his language and his conclusion are in conformity with those of the author of the Free Enquiry. "In an Irish MS. of the four Gospels, of which I shall give you an account in my next "letter, the genealogy of Jesus is inserted apart, among "certain preliminary pieces; and the first chapter of "Matthew begins at these words, 'Now the birth of "Jesus was on this wise." p. 18. In his second letter, Mr. Toland describes this MS. more minutely: "It is "not only very remarkable and valuable for being a relique of the ancient Irish church, but moreover for "being one of the correctest copies I have ever seen, and "finely written in Irish characters; as also for various "readings of some importance, for some very singular "observations, and for a Catena Patrum on the Gospel "of St. Matthew, (interspersed with a few notes in the "Irish tongue,) that destroys the credit of certain corrupt editions of the Fathers, wherein some of these

“ passages being manifestly depraved, it probably follows, that many more are so. There is an interlineary gloss of little worth in another hand, and some odd separate pieces, among whom the genealogy of Christ, which I told you in my last letter did not begin the first chapter of Matthew.” p. 2. In a third passage he states the circumstances in this manner, after observing that Tatian left the genealogy out of his gospel,—so that the want of this genealogy in the Irish copy of Matthew is not so strange a thing as it may seem at first sight.” p. 19.” In “ a most venerable exemplar of the four Gospels of St. Jerom’s version with the prefaces and canons of Eusebius,” “ the genealogy of our blessed Saviour appears to be distinct and separated from St. Matthew’s Gospel. The following words in two independent lines occurring after the 17th verse of that chapter, *Genealogia Hucusque. Incip. Evangl. Secd. Matth.*” There is the same distinction in the famous copy of the four Gospels, formerly belonging to King Æthelstan,” and also “ in the Latin Gospels written with red ink, about the beginning of the 11th century, and in the Anglo-Norman character.” The Irish MS. is “ a Latin MS. copy.” Nazaren. p. 1. lett. ii. As the author of the Free Enquiry has argued from the mode of placing the genealogy in various MSS. I think myself at liberty to consider likewise the manner of transcribing it, which may afford as much light at least as the preceding circumstance respecting its authority; and the preface to the second edition of the Enquiry will furnish, I presume, the necessary information. Among the same Harleian MSS. is found, No. 1802, “ *Genealogia D. N. I. C. five initium Evangelii secundum Matthæum cum notis, fol. 3. b.*” “ This,” says Mr. Wanley, “ is written separately from the rest of the Gospel, and amongst other prefaces, as being looked upon as a pre-

“face.” *I have seen other antient copies of the Evangelists,*
 “*written in Ireland, or coming from books written by Irish*
 “*men, wherein this sacred genealogy was not rejected, but*
 “*misplaced. There would nevertheless appear a great*
 “*distinction between it, and what followed. The words*
 “*Xρ̄i autem generatio being illuminated again, as if the*
 “*Gospel began there.*” Pref. p. 17. The genealogy, it
 seems, participated equally in the same honorary embel-
 lishments of the artist. Another MS. N^o. 2795. of the
 Harleian collection contains the four Gospels. “In this
 “MS. the genealogy is in gold capitals, till generatio-
 “*fic erat, which words are also in gold capitals: the rest*
 “*is written in red letters.*” This MS. is supposed to be
 of the 11th century. Is there any indication here that
 the transcriber, or his employers, wished “to get rid”
 of the genealogy? “Among the Cottonian MSS. in the
 “British Museum there is a quarto volume marked Tib.
 “A. 11. *finely illuminated at the beginning of St. Mat-*
 “*thew’s genealogy; written in gold letters on a blue ground*
 “*till omnes ergo generationes ab Abraham, and afterwards*
 “*it is written in plain letters of that age, that is, towards*
 “*the beginning of the tenth century.*” Pref. p. 20. “In
 “that ancient MS. (the Dublin MS.) *part of the genea-*
 “*logy is wanting; but it is evidently owing to the tearing*
 “*or wearing of the vellum, because the last part of it is*
 “*still legible. I think it begins about the 13th verse,*
 “*but there are marks of the vellum being torn off.*”
 Pref. p. 21. The Author here observes, “that no infor-
 “mation concerning our enquiry can be derived from
 “this manuscript.” I am not of this opinion. The in-
 formation is of this extent. Part of the genealogy still
 remains legible; and if all the vellum had been preserved,
 we should have had all the genealogy. But if the com-
 mencement were never written, I do not know how to
 account for the objection to its appearance ceasing at the

13th verse. The inference of the Enquirer is most bold. "The account of MSS. above given is intended only to shew, that the genealogy of St. Matthew seems to have been of dubious authority for many centuries. Indeed it seems to have been suspected in very early ages." Pref. pag. xxii. What external proof of suspicion exists? "The Harleian MS. No. 1802. seems *plainly* to shew, that St. Matthew's genealogy was not held in much estimation in 1139, for it is separated from the rest of the Gospel by prologues, notes, and old poems." It may indeed be separated, but it still has reference to the place which it occupied, and had engaged the attention of some person so much as to induce him to comment upon it. "Genealogia D. N. I. C. *five initium* Evangelii *secundum Matthæum cum notis.*" Or is it pretended, that the object of these notes is to caution the reader against its reception, by demonstrating its want of authenticity?

With respect to the two first chapters of St. Matthew, Dr. Marsh observes, "Epiphanius expressly says (Adv. Hæref. xxx. 13.) that the Hebrew Gospel used by the Ebionites began with the words, 'Ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἡρώδης τοῦ βασιλέως. Their Gospel therefore contained no part of Matth. i. ii." Vol. iii. part. ii. p. 136. Epiphanius accuses them of having *cut away* the genealogies. But this is not evidence against, but in favour of, the existence of this introductory portion of St. Matthew's Gospel in the Hebrew. It is clear that the Gospel was not delivered into their hands with this deficiency, and therefore their practice affords a period to ascertain the usual state in which this book had been transmitted. Dr. Marsh's statement is, to say the least of it, incautious. Cerinthus retained the genealogy; whence appears the difference between the original of the Cerinthians, and arbitrary mutilation by the Ebionites.

Pag. 181. "Tatian's Diatessaron." Dr. Williams, in his Free Enquiry, is not at a loss to convert either the fury or the forbearance of the orthodox Christians to his own advantage. Theodoret says of the two hundred copies of Tatian's Diatessaron, "*all which I took away, and laid aside, in a parcel.*" On which words there is this note; "Others, most probably, did the same, which will very naturally account for Tatian's genuine works being soon lost." But who are these others? and what influenced them? The reader however will see, that if a book were burnt, it was not orthodox; and if it were merely neglected, it contained nothing so contrary to general opinion as to be esteemed dangerous. "But if this Harmony was a dangerous work, one might rather expect that the whole two hundred would have been committed to the flames." Thus is the Father's moderation changed into a testimony in favour of the book, although he says, that the persons who used it did not perceive "the fraud of the composition." Dr. W. is offended that the Father should have only consigned to some oblivious recess what he condemned as a fraud, and therefore the sentence of the Father respecting the contents of this "parcel" is thought to be at variance with the execution of it.

Page 184. "wished to get rid of it." "Consequently," adds Dr. Marsh, "it is highly uncritical to take *their* manuscripts even into consideration." But can it be shewn, that the writers of these "few Latin MSS." were embarrassed in reconciling the two genealogies, and that the writers of the Greek MSS. were able to reconcile them, and therefore inserted that of St. Matthew as the commencement of his Gospel? The reason here assigned for the difference between some of the Latin MSS. and those of the Greek transcribers, would have produced an explana-

tion. The difficulty in question was not so recent as these Latin MSS.

P. 186. "Hebrew stemmata." I was first struck with Jones's translation of the word *φυλὴν*, and turned to the passage in Epiphanius, but did not consult the annotators, as the passage did not seem to be obscure. I have since seen Toland's Nazarenus, in which he remarks, "Nay, he (Epiphanius) farther acquaints us, how in the fourth century, while Constantine the Great reigned, this genealogy, with other curious pieces in Hebrew, was found by a certain Joseph in a cell of the treasury at Tiberias, which he honestly broke open to steal some money; and that this odd accident was the chief reason of his becoming a Christian. But whether the word there signifies the Genealogy by itself according to Petavius, or the whole Gospel of Matthew according to Fabricius, it is certain that Tatian left the Genealogy out of his Gospel." I did not copy my own opinion from Petavius or Fabricius, for I had not seen their notes. The expressions of Theodoret, that the Christians used the Diatessaron of Tatian simply as a compendious work, make it probable, that these Christians knew that there existed other more minute Gospel histories, of which either they had then no copies, or very few in comparison of those of Tatian's work. We are to consider, that two hundred MSS., even when MSS. were so commonly dispersed, would constitute a large proportion, if not the whole of the means of their religious instruction. The conduct of the Father was highly commendable. The entire Gospels were properly placed in the hands of Christians, that they might know and examine to what parts the opposition of adversaries was directed, and that their faith might be exposed to all the trials of the times.

P. 187. "This gospel." Toland is of opinion, but I

am not disposed to agree with him, that Epiphanius has confounded the Gospel according to the Hebrews with that of St. Matthew. "But yet," says he, p. 19. Nazarenus, "Epiphanius, who confounds every thing, (as particularly this Gospel of the Hebrews with that of Matthew,) tells us, &c." Epiphanius speaks of this Gospel of Matthew used by the Ebionites as also denominated "according to the Hebrews, the Hebrew Gospel," Adv. Hæref. t. i. p. 127. et 137. I have said, that it had one name from the "Jewish party who received it." I might have said, from the persons to whom it was particularly addressed.

P. 188. "evidence of the ancient Father." Epiphanius has been severely censured by Dr. Horsley; but if his authority be really impugned by the arguments of that learned Prelate, it is useless to produce it in any case whatever. "Epiphanius," says Dr. Horsley, "expresses a doubt of their heterodoxy (the Nazarenes) upon the article of our Lord's divinity, in such terms as ought to leave no doubt upon the mind of his reader of their orthodoxy in that particular." p. 145. I do not discern the cause of this animadversion. Dr. H. allows that the words of Epiphanius are, "I am not *informed* to say, whether they too, carried away with the impiety of the afore-mentioned Cerinthus and Merinthus, think him a mere man." Nor was he acquainted with the state of the Gospel which they used. The Father, however, alludes to these Nazarenes in another passage, and perhaps Dr. H.'s assertion may appear to be rash. Epiphanius is speaking of the causes which induced St. John to write his Gospel. Διὸ καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐλθὼν ὁ μακάριος, καὶ εὐρὼν τὰς ἀνθρώπους ἡσυχολημένους περὶ τὴν κάτω Χριστὴν παρουσίαν, καὶ τῶν μὲν Ἐβιωναίων πλανηθέντων διὰ τὴν ἑνσαρκον Χριστὸν γενεαλογίαν ἀπὸ Ἀβραάμ καταγομένην καὶ Λεκᾶ ἀναγομένην ἄχρι τῷ Ἀδὰμ.

παρὰν δὲ τὰς Κηρινθιανὰς καὶ Μηρινθιανὰς, ἐκ παραιτριβῆς αὐτὸν λέγοντας εἶναι ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ τὰς ΝΑΖΩΠΑΙΟΥΣ καὶ ἄλλας πολλὰς αἵρέσεις, κ. τ. λ. p. 746. Adv. Hæref. I have not confounded the Nafareans with the Nazoreans, who, Dr. H. says, were the Christian Nazarenes, Ναζωραῖοι. p. 132. It is not to my purpose to pursue this argument. I have proved all I wished to prove, that Dr. H. might have here used with propriety less violent terms in speaking of the Father, and perhaps too of Dr. Priestley, on the subject of the opinions of the Nazarenes. I do not apprehend, though I speak with diffidence, that Epiphanius intended to mention any others besides those who professed heretical tenets.

P. 207. "St Matthew's Gospel." Mr. Evanfon has alleged another instance of ignorance of the geography of Palestine in this Gospel, which I shall give at full length, because the answer to it is very short and decisive. "In the account he has thought fit to give us of the cause of his dwelling at Nazareth in Galilee, he has betrayed an ignorance of the geography of Palestine, which cannot be attributed to Matthew, nor to any other native of that country. He tells us, that Joseph, on his return out of Ægypt, after the death of Herod, finding that his son reigned in his stead, was afraid to go into Judea, and therefore, by divine admonition, 'turned aside into the parts of Galilee.' Here the reader is requested to remark, first, that Galilee having been as much under Herod's jurisdiction as Judea, and his kingdom having been divided amongst his sons after his death, it was a son of Herod who reigned in his stead in Galilee, as well as in Judea; consequently the child Jesus could be no securer in one province, than in the other. He is next desired to cast his eyes upon the map of Palestine,

“ and observe, *how impossible* it was for Joseph to have
 “ gone from Ægypt to Nazareth without travelling
 “ through the whole extent of Archelaus’s kingdom, un-
 “ less he undertook a long peregrination through the de-
 “ ferts, on the north and east of the lake Asphaltites, and
 “ the country of Moab, and then either crossed the Jor-
 “ dan into Samaria, or the lake of Gennesareth into Ga-
 “ lilee, and from thence went to the city Nazareth ; and
 “ *if it were at all credible* that the latter were the case,
 “ with what propriety could such a tedious journey have
 “ been denominated, ‘ *turning aside into the parts of Ga-*
 “ *lilee.*” Diff. p. 160. To the first remark it may be suffi-
 cient to reply, that however unwilling Joseph might be
 to return to Judea, yet he was commanded in a dream to
 go within the limits of the jurisdiction of a new governor,
 although he were a son of Herod. The word “ turned
 “ aside” is a mere inaccuracy of our version, and Mr. E.
 has not argued from the original word ἀνεχώρησεν. In
 examining Schleusner, I found a reference to Herodian ;
 and the passage is so much to the purpose, that I shall
 produce it. Ἦσαν δὲ τινες, οἱ διαδράντες πρὸς τὸ παρὸν ἀνακε-
 χωρήκεσαν δέει τῆς παρουσίας τοιούτου βασιλέως. Lib. i. c. 3.
 §. 13. I add a part of Irmisch’s note ; “ Conf. Thuc. Ind.
 “ negligente P. hic, ubi, ut et 7, 2, 6, et 10. de iisdem
 “ Germanis significat, recessisse in terras suas interiores, et
 “ maxime in silvas, tum ibi commodius pugnatu-
 “ rum salutis causa, ut tutius laterent ; ut ἀναχ. dicitur proprie
 “ de iis, qui secedunt securitatis et incolumitatis ergo.
 “ Conf. Læfner.” The term will denote the mode of
 passing unobserved from Ægypt to Galilee through Judea,
 which cannot be better described than in the language of
 holy writ, Judges v. 6. “ In the days of Shamgar the
 “ son of Anath, in the days of Jael, *the highways were*
 “ *unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways.*”

When Joseph had arrived at Nazareth, the contempt in which that place was proverbially held might be the security of the infant Jesus.

Mr. E. is fond of this species of objection, for he adduces another. "In verses 13, 14, 15, we have another "remarkable instance," he says, "of the author's very "imperfect knowledge of the geography of Palestine, "which cannot be supposed of any native of the coun- "try; as well as another direct contradiction to the "much more probable account given us by Luke. As "if he imagined the city of Nazareth was not as pro- "perly in Galilee as Capernaum was," (which indeed seems implied also in the second chapter, where he tells us, Joseph went aside, not into Galilee, but into the parts or coasts of Galilee) "he informs us, that, after John's "imprisonment, our Saviour departed into Galilee, and, "leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt at Capernaum in or- "der to fulfil a saying of Isaiah's respecting the country "beyond Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles. Now to- "Isaiah, or any inhabitant of Judea, the country *beyond* "must be the country *east* of the Jordan, as Gaulonitis, or "Galilee of the Gentiles, is well known to have been; "whereas Capernaum was a city on the *western* side of "the lake of Gennesareth, through which the Jordan "flows." Diff. p. 164. It is here assumed as "well, "known," that Gaulonitis was on the eastern side of the Jordan, and it may be admitted; but it was not synonymous with "Galilee of the Gentiles," for no part of Galilee was on the eastern side of the Jordan. Neither do we know whether Isaiah denominated Galilee of the Gentiles with respect to his own situation in Judea. All the principal part of Canaan was called the country beyond Jordan, before it was occupied by the Israelites. It might have the appellation relatively to those nations who had hitherto sat in darkness and in the shadow of

death. But how shall we be able to dispose of the tribes of Zebulon and Naphthali, the limits of whose territories never extended to the east of Jordan. To this place may be referred an objection of Mr. E's to the authenticity of the Epistle to the Romans, since an answer to this objection is furnished by an appeal to a geographical writer. "I cannot forbear remarking farther the inconsistency of this writer," says Mr. E. p. 310. Diff. (which indeed must generally be discernible in all falsifiers,) "in making Paul personally acquainted with so long a list of members of the church at Rome, where he had never been; amongst whom we find Aquila and Priscilla, and even his own mother, to whom he sends salutation in the last chapter, v. 13. Of the two first Luke tells us, that, about, or rather before, the pretended date of this epistle, they had left Rome, being Jews, in obedience to an edict of Claudius. And if there is any reason to believe that Paul's mother was then living, is it credible that an old woman of Tarsus in Cilicia, whose son was so wonderfully appointed to preach the Gospel, and who was occupied in that commission in Asia and Greece, should leave her native country, and such a son, and ramble after other preachers of the Gospel, at so advanced an age, to the far distant metropolis of Italy?" We may invalidate some of this conjecture by ancient facts. Rome was the great resort of the natives of Tarsus and Alexandria; for Strabo informs us, Μάλισα δ' ἡ Ῥώμη δύναται διδάσκειν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐκ τῆσδε τῆς πόλεως φιλολόγων. Ταρσέων γὰρ καὶ Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐστὶ μεσῆ. Lib. xiv. p. 675, or 962. But it was not Rome only which they visited. They had a turn for general *rambling* to places where they could improve themselves, and they were all φιλόλογοι. Οὐδ' αὐτοὶ, says Strabo, μένουσιν αὐτόθι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τελειῶνται ἐκδημήσαντες, καὶ τελειωθέντες ξενιτεύουσιν. ἡδέως, κατέρχονται δ' ὀλίγοι. Lib. xiv. p. 674, or 961. Hence it is not improbable that Priscilla and Aquila might have

been known to St. Paul before they were at Rome; and the affectionate term of mother, which he applies to some matron at Rome, confirms the supposition, that she might be a native of Tarsus, and had been not merely useful, but had shewn a tender regard for him in some of his sufferings, or during his abode at Tarsus. Nothing contradicts the supposition, that many of the persons at Rome may have been personally acquainted with him before their residence there; and many arguments make it probable, that there were many natives of Tarsus at Rome, who, whether known or unknown to him, would befriend him, as a fellow citizen, in his appeal to Cæsar. It is not unpleasant to be able to repress the licentiousness of infidel conjecture.

P. 209. It is necessary to explain the causes of the defects of this discourse, which however originate in the want of materials. The want of direct information, and the small proportion even of that which is collateral, must be my defence against any imputation of incoherence and desultory observation. Mr. E. is recurring unceasingly to his abuse of the Church as established by Constantine. It may be sufficient to extract the following passages from Mosheim's work, *De Reb. Christ. ante Const. Magn.*

“ Qui Constantini religionem oppugnant ostendere volunt
 “ dominandi cupiditatem tantum apud animum ejus potuisse, ut se Christianum simularet, aut viam eum sibi ad
 “ supremum imperium per fictam religionis Christianæ
 “ professionem munire voluisse. Ego quidem, ut de me
 “ aliquid prædicem, Historiam illorum temporum, qua
 “ fieri potuit diligentia inspexi ac consideravi, neque tam
 “ men perspicere potui Christianam religionem desiderium ejus sine socio regnandi, quo eum flagrasse infitiri
 “ nolo, vel juvisse, vel juvare ac promovere potuisse. Felicititer ille ac cum gloria regnaverat nondum Christianus,

“ et nulli religioni addictus ; et eadem felicitate ad supremum imperium pervenire, atque magnas res gerere potuisset, si vel in magorum religione perseverasset, atque Diis servire perrexisset.” p. 969, 970. “ Constantinum post victoriam de Maxentio non Christianam religionem fupra reliquas omnes evexisse, atque unice veram judicasse, verum Christianis tantum potestatem concessisse, religionem suam profitendi, *pacem vero facultatem omnibus, nulla prorsus excepta, sectis et religionibus tribuisse* ; neque etiam idem perpendit multitudini ac numero Deorum cultores illo tempore Christianis longe superiores fuisse, licet ubique Christiani versarentur.” p. 670.

P. 265. note. A doubt was suggested to me by a learned friend, the accuracy and extent of whose knowledge on any point of ancient erudition I do not intend to question, whether *Græcis literis* denoted more than the Greek characters. Davies, the editor of Cicero's philosophical works, contends, that this is the meaning of the words. Cæsar says, “ In castris Helvetiorum tabulæ repertæ sunt litteris Græcis confectæ, et ad Cæsarem latae ; quibus in tabulis nominatim ratio confecta erat, qui numerus domo exisset eorum, qui arma ferre possent ; et item separatim pueri, senes, mulieresque.” Cæf. de Bello Gallico, lib. i. In the passage relating to the Druids the same words are used ; which, it is asserted, signify the use of the Greek letters only, and not of the Greek language. “ Neque fas esse existimant ea literis mandare, quum in reliquis fere rebus, publicis privatisque rationibus Græcis literis utuntur.” In confirmation of this opinion, (having previously admitted that the word *Græcis* is to be found in all the MSS.) Pliny's testimony is produced : “ Gentium consensus tacitus primus omnium conspiravit, ut Ionum literis uterentur.” Nat. Hist. lib. vii.

c. 57. This relates to the ancient form only of their letters. We shall examine how this sense of mere characters will agree with the tenor of Cæsar's letter to Q. Cicero. "Tum cuidam ex equitibus Gallis magnis præmiis persuadet, uti ad Ciceronem epistolam deferat. Hanc Græcis conscriptam literis mittit, ne, intercepta epistola, nostra ab hostibus consilia cognoscantur." Now if the preceding passage of Pliny is well applied, it may be shewn that the object of concealment would not have been attained by the use of the Latin language and Greek characters; "Veteres Græcas fuisse easdem pene quæ nunc sunt Latinæ, indicio erit Delphica tabula antiqui æris." This is a continuation of the same subject; and although the extract is distinguished as another, but still a subsequent chapter or section, yet it is evidently separated only accidentally from the preceding. 2. Cæsar represents the Druids as familiarly acquainted with the Greek language; and yet Davies observes, that Divitiacus, one of the Druids, addressed Cæsar in an interview through an interpreter, which was unnecessary, if he himself had understood Greek. Perhaps this may be explained. Cæsar had remonstrated with the Ædui before a convention of their chiefs, that he could not obtain supplies for his army. Liscus, who presided over the political magistracy, intimated, that this difficulty arose from Dumnorix, the brother of Divitiacus; "Cæsar hac oratione Lisci Dumnorigem Divitiaci fratrem designari sentiebat; sed, quod pluribus præsentibus eas res jactari nolebat, celeriter concilium dimittit; Liscum retinet. Quærit ex solo ea, quæ in conventu dixerat. Dicit liberius atque audacius. Eadem secreto ab aliis reperit esse vera." He afterwards wished to obtain farther information from Divitiacus himself: "Itaque, prius quam quidquam conaresur, Divitiacum ad se vocari jubet, et, quotidianis interpretibus remotis, per

“ C. Valerium Procillum, principem Galliæ provinciæ, familiarem suum, cui summam rerum omnium fidem habebat, cum eo colloquitur; simul commonefacit, quæ, ipso præsentē, de Dumnorige sint dicta, et ostendit, quæ separatim quisque de eo apud se dixerit.” It is evident that Cæsar commenced the conference, and selected the language in which it should be conducted; and we are not to be surprised that he should prefer the native language of a person who was to be examined respecting affairs in which he might be induced to misrepresent his own conduct, and that of his brother. Strabo describes the Gauls as φιλέλληνες. We might therefore argue, that, if the account of Strabo be correct, Cæsar should not have had either his ordinary or extraordinary interpreters of the Celtic, since it may be presumed that the Greek language prevailed extensively at least among those with whom Cæsar might be obliged to communicate. There were occasions, when it was more proper to use one language than the other; although either could have been employed, and certainly the native language would be preferred, where we can suppose it to have been a matter either of political ceremony, or of political precaution. It must be remarked, that the instance of the Helvetii might have been erased without any injury to the argument of the discourse; but every example was impugned where the words *literæ Græcæ* were used to describe the fact. The philological part of the question without doubt favours my deductions, and the same phraseology is found in the Greek language. The connection of Gaul with Asia Minor by a migration and settlement of a colony is well known.

P. 271. “ vernacular tongue.” Francisc. Burmann. Exercit. Academ. b. ii. disp. 4. Immo ipsos Judæos pro

vernacula linguam Græcam apud se, fere in ipsa etiam Judæa, agnovisse adductis e Judæorum magistris testimoniis confirmat Rumpæus.

I much wished to have considered the origin and application of the apocryphal gospels, and the history of the latter Platonists : but these topics must be reserved for another opportunity, if another should ever occur.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

PAGE 89. "Adapting the Gospel of St. Luke." Mr. Evanſon, Diſſon. p. 140, 141. has taken a moſt unwarrantable liberty with a paſſage of Chillingworth, in order to vindicate his own aſſumption of one Gospel, as ſufficient for the uſe of Chriſtians. The concluſion of the quotation from Chillingworth is this ; "When you have well conſidered theſe propoſals, I believe you will be very apt to think (if St. Luke be of credit with you) that all things neceſſary to ſalvation are certainly contained in his writings alone." Then comes Mr. Evanſon, and cuts off what he does not like, for ſuch reaſons as leave no authority for the remainder, which he exempts from proſcription, and tells us, that St. Luke's Gospel is ſufficient for Chriſtians ; as if Mr. E's Gospel of St. Luke and Mr. C's were the ſame books.

P. 95. "The martyr Juſtin." Le Clerc has cenſured Juſtin Martyr for aſſerting, that at Rome capital puniſhment was ordered to be inflicted upon thoſe who read the books of the Prophets, Hydaſpes, and the Sibylls. But it is not improbable that this might have been the caſe, although no other writer has recorded the fact. We have no complete collection of the ediſts of the Prætors. Beſides, the Prophets, Hydaſpes, and the Sibyll, would all fall under the claſs of *libri vaticini*. Livy has recorded : "*Quoties hoc patrum avorumque ætate negotium eſt magiſtratibus datum, ut ſacra externa fieri*

“vetarent?—*vaticinos libros conquirerent comburerent—que?*” We may surely believe that they would prohibit the reading of such books, since in the persecution of Dioclesian they burnt the books of the Christians, or in their place, or together with them, the refractory possessors themselves; and, as Bishop Watson has well remarked, “the very expedient of forcing the Christians to deliver up their religious books, which was practised in this persecution, and which Mosheim attributes to the advice of Hierocles, and you (Mr. Gibbon) to that of the philosophers of those times, seems clear to me, from the places in Livy before quoted, to have been nothing but an old piece of state policy, to which the Romans had recourse as often as they apprehended their established religion to be in any danger.” *Apolo-
gy for Christianity*, p. 168, 169. ed. 12^{mo}. The question, whether these books were alike genuine, or alike spurious, was not discussed by the Roman politician; but he read them, and anticipated the use to which they might be applied.

P. 114. “St. Paul.” This Apostle says to Timothy, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The effect of oral teaching was meant to be the same in both these instances; and we have the best defence of the want of a declaration, that St. Matthew’s Gospel was written by the person whose name it bears, in the example of Galen, referred to by Wetstein. The true cause of the omission of the name of the writer was this; it was unnecessary. Galenus de libris suis: Φίλοις γὰρ ἢ μαθηταῖς ἐδόδοτο χάρις ἐπιγραφῆς, ὥς ἂν οὐδὲ πρὸς ἑκδοσιν, ἀλλ’ αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις γεγονότα, δεηθεῖσιν, ὧν ἤκουσαν, ἔχειν ὑπομνήματα—ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπλῶς διδῶς τοῖς μαθηταῖς οὐδὲν ἐπέγραψα. Wetstein. That

which was written had previously been spoken in both cafes before many witneffes.

P. 120. I fhall here reprint my remarks upon St. Luke's preface to his Gospel, which were not recommended to Dr. Marfh's perufal by any patron of mine, but which I refolved to republifh in confequence of that important recommendation. The cautions to the readers of the Introduction of Michaelis were abfolutely neceffary. I would afk, whether thofe, who have perufed that work, have not fometimes forgotten that the fubject of it was any thing efteemed facred. I have fuperftition enough, if it fhould pleafe any perfon to call the feeling by that name, to be offended with the familiarity and confidence of critics, in fpeaking of the books of holy writ; and I am difpofed to think that critical habits may in many instances be regarded as the true fource of prejudices againft the opinion of infpiration, or fupernatural aid, being afforded in the compofition of our holy books. The licentious employment of probabilities is peculiarly unfavourable to the belief, that man has accomplished with divine affiftance, and according to divine promife, that which the critic flatters himfelf he can place by the help of his art within the fphere of mere human ability.

Since the preface of St. Luke is the only evidence of the exiftence of narratives of the life and actions of Chrift, prior to his own, it is the foundation of the whole of Dr. Marfh's hypothetical fystem of documents, and therefore I wifh to fee whether it be "rock," or "fand."

According to Dr. Marfh's hypothefis, a Hebrew document exifted, which was the bafis of the feveral Gofpels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke; that it was copied by the former Evangelift, and translated by

the two latter. I should be induced to infer from this character of the document, that its authority was greater than that of the writings of the person who copied it, and of those who translated it; and therefore ought to have been, from such pretensions, acknowledged, by the conduct of the Apostle Matthew, the original Gospel. It was, however, "drawn up from communications made by the Apostles," p. 197; "a short narrative containing the principal transactions of Jesus Christ from his baptism to his death," p. 196.

"The person, or persons, who drew it up, might entitle it 'A narrative of those things, which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word,' "a title, which St. Luke himself has quoted in the preface to his Gospel," p. 197.

This title I shall consider in another place.

We must observe, that the conjecture of the title of the supposed document is returned in the next sentence to its owner Lessing, after Dr. M. has used it; and he desires the reader to notice, that the application is the interest which he has in it; and that neither Lessing, nor Storr, who approved the conjecture, thought of this application of it—an assertion, which I suppose the reader will immediately believe.

That this conjecture is not ill founded, Dr. M. maintains by these arguments.

1. "After St. Luke had written," 'Forasmuch as many have undertaken to set forth in order,' "he would have used the word narrative," (declaration in our version) "not in the singular, but in the plural number; if by this word he had meant, as it is commonly supposed, to express narratives written by these 'many.'" The question in this place does not relate to an idiom, to any

peculiar construction of words, or to any mode of phraseology of the Greek language ; but to a form of speech, which must be examined by the principles of grammar, common to all languages ; and therefore we may be allowed to seek for an analogy in our own. I did not despair of discovering an example in the first historical work which lay upon my table. The following passage from Hampton's Polybius, p. 32, vol. i. 8vo. will shew that St. Luke might have used such an expression, without intending to denote what Dr. M. and the German theologians suppose, and without occasioning any ambiguity. The word was currently used for seventeen centuries, and suggested nothing of the kind. It was not suspected that any hidden meaning was involved in so plain a phrase ; or that any one could hesitate about the number of authors, and the number of their narratives. Hampton says, " There are *many* indeed who have " written *an account* of particular wars, and among them " some, perhaps, have added a few coincident events." I do not imagine that any other person would infer from St. Luke's words, that the narrative was the joint composition of the ' many ;' nor from those of Hampton, that the ' many,' who wrote different accounts of particular wars, nevertheless composed one account only amongst them. The critic that should censure the translator's accuracy, and accuse him of confounding the meaning, would be thought to have very fastidious and finical notions of propriety. St. Luke, indeed, has been more precise ; for he is speaking of accounts of the same facts.

2. " The word ' set forth in order' is not synonymous " in the original to write a narrative ; for it does not " signify to write a new narrative, but to arrange a narrative already written."

Against Dr. M.'s interpretation are Grotius, Casau-

bon, Raphelius, Wolfius, Alex. Morus, and Dr. Townson, who refers to these writers; but let us try Dr. M.'s signification.

'Forasmuch as many have undertaken to *re-arrange* a narrative of those things, which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.' We must observe, that Dr. M. says, p. 197. that this narrative was "drawn up from communications made by the Apostles," and therefore that it was not only "a work of good authority, but a work which was worthy of furnishing materials to any one of the Apostles, who had formed a resolution of writing a more complete history," "a short narrative, containing the principal transactions of Jesus Christ, from his baptism to his death;" "not a finished history, but a document containing only materials for a history."

First, then, many of the Apostles contributed to this "short narrative;" secondly, it was the work of many persons (whether Apostles or not, or inspired, Dr. M. entirely forgot to *suppose*) to "re-arrange" it. Who was fit to undertake to re-arrange the communications of the Apostles? But we must proceed yet further. This document was very defective, it seems. "In process of time, as new communications from the Apostles, and other eye-witnesses, brought to light either additional circumstances, relative to transactions already recorded in the first Hebrew document, or transactions which had been left wholly unnoticed;" these were added in the MS. by the possessors of the first Hebrew document, "and these additions in subsequent copies were inserted in the text," page 200.

The work, then, to which St. Luke is thought to refer, was first written by no body knows whom, and

yet possessed such a claim to authority, as to induce St. Matthew to copy it; but yet written irregularly and without any method, so that it required a new arrangement. It must appear very strange that the Apostles should furnish their materials by piece-meal, in such a desultory and capricious manner, at various times, and in detached portions. I should maintain that a work so framed was *not* "worthy of furnishing materials to any "one" (much less to any) "of the Apostles." The narrative was drawn up by an unknown person or persons (their names are not mentioned, but Dr. M. supposes them to be Apostles; yet as we are not informed of their names, we cannot judge of the supposition) from the communications of the Apostles, then re-arranged by another set of unknown persons.

The business which Dr. M. assigns to St. Luke was to translate this Hebrew document, "enriched by additions," "and to adhere to it throughout in the *arrangement* of the facts, because he was not an Apostle and "eye-witness," p. 205.

But what does "write" mean in St. Luke's Preface? I should think it meant "a new narrative." The "many" re-arranged an old narrative. What did St. Luke do as distinguishing his labour from theirs? He "wrote;" and so simple a word cannot, I maintain, by all the sophistry and utmost torture of perversion, be brought to signify all that Dr. M. describes, without imputing to St. Luke unworthy motives and corrupt views.

I adopt then, with the great authorities before mentioned, the plain and obvious meaning "compose;" and at any rate it was not a proper term to express his share in the narrative, (if he did no more than Dr. M. *supposes*,) as contrasted with the work of the "many."

3. "If these had been St. Luke's own words, he must.

“have said ‘as they delivered them unto them,’ “and
 “not as they ‘delivered them unto us;’ for “although
 “we may say of other persons, that they have under-
 “taken to write a history, as eye-witnesses have related
 “the facts to them, we cannot well say that they have
 “undertaken to write a history, as eye-witnesses have re-
 “lated the facts to us,” p. 198.

Dr. M. is proud of this thought. “No commentator,
 “as far as I know, has made this remark, although it
 “appears to be a very obvious one.”

This is not the only instance, I apprehend, where Dr. M. has the imaginary advantage of appearing alone amongst the commentators. But to proceed: when writers compose narratives of events contemporary with themselves, is it not usual for readers to compare the written relation with the account of eye-witnesses; and what greater commendation can a work of that kind receive, than that it is confirmed by such testimony?

4. “If so many persons had written narratives of
 “Christ’s transactions, and had written only what eye-
 “witnesses to these transactions had related, there was
 “the less necessity for St. Luke to write a Gospel;
 “and Theophilus might have known the certainty of
 “these things, if St. Luke had not written.”

I cannot accede to this argument: the number of accounts is little to the purpose. All the persons, who received these various narratives, were not acquainted, probably, with the circumstance, that they agreed with the evidence of eye-witnesses. St. Luke could not promise greater certainty upon this ground than the “many.” He could only relate what he knew himself; and I am disposed to believe he was an eye-witness of all he relates. But let us admit, that he only related what he received from eye-witnesses. What then distinguished his narrative from those of the “many?” I conclude

that there was a defect in the authority of the writers. Their story turned out to be true upon enquiry, but it wanted confirmation. St. Luke's character was a sufficient security for the reception of his Gospel: "It seemed good to me also." If I might be allowed to indulge in a conjecture, I should say, that he opposes his own well known character and history to the uncertain qualifications of the "many."

I have been less struck with the verbal harmony of the Evangelists, than with another coincidence—that out of the exuberance of matter which the life of Christ must have supplied, and where we cannot suppose for a moment that any selection was made upon the ground of one event, or one miracle, or one parable, or one precept, being more worthy of insertion than another; where what was omitted could be omitted for no other reason but that God thought what was recorded was sufficient for his high purposes; that so many facts are mentioned in common by the Evangelists, than that so little matter has been added.

I solemnly protest against the application of the critic's laws respecting biography and history to the life of Christ, as related by the Evangelists. It is not simply a piece of biography. The life of Christ was the Gospel itself, the glad tidings of salvation; and Dr. M. observes, that the "good tidings," or Gospel, was used, after the first century, as synonymous with the "Life of Christ," p. 197, note. The life of Christ was a new religious dispensation. The death and resurrection of Christ were not only facts, but likewise points of doctrine. Shall I presume thus to decide upon the defects or excellence of compositions which I never saw, of which nothing remains; or upon the merits of writings, which were designed to introduce into the world a new system of religion? I dare not.

5. "All the objections are removed by the supposition, "that the words from 'a declaration to ministers of 'the word' are "nothing more than a Greek translation "of a Hebrew title, which had been adopted by the "writer or writers of the Hebrew document."

Long titles, *if any*, are not characteristic of other ancient Oriental writings, and therefore I should apprehend Dr. M. and his German associates have not imitated in this supposition the ancient Hebrew costume. I am not provided with the means of prosecuting this enquiry, but I believe my assertion is not groundless. "In the interval, which elapsed between the composition "of this document and that of St. Luke's Gospel, many "persons had attempted to re-arrange and new model "the Hebrew narrative, by making in it additions, transpositions, &c. in short, re-arranging * the narrative; "and that as not all the additions which had been made "by these many writers were drawn from the best "sources, St. Luke, who had accurately traced every "transaction from the beginning, resolved to compose a "narrative, of which he made (as others had done) the authentic document the basis, but introduced only such additions as he knew were consistent with the truth; that "Theophilus, for whose immediate use he wrote, might "know the certainty of those things in which he had been "instructed." Saint Luke then, it seems, used a document, which was so corrupted, by the time it came to his hands, that it contained falsehoods; for if St. Luke introduced only such additions as were consistent with truth, the many must have inserted what was not consistent with truth. Dr. M. indeed softens the obvious in-

* Here Dr. M. uses the Greek word, which he says signifies *re-arrange*, although he extends the meaning far beyond what the primitive sense *re-arrange* will justify. Arrangement relates only to order, but addition relates to defects and omissions.

ference, by saying, "they had undesignedly blended accurate with inaccurate accounts;" that is, confounded the true and the false together, did not know how to distinguish one from the other; and yet they were Apostles, or eye-witnesses, as we shall see. But how came these additions not to be "drawn from the best sources?" The supposed first Hebrew document with the supposed additions is otherwise described by Dr. M. p. 200. "In process of time, as new communications from the Apostles and other eye-witnesses brought to light either additional circumstances relative to transactions already recorded in it, or transactions which had been left wholly unnoticed, those persons who possessed copies of it added in their MSS. such additional circumstances and transactions; and these additions, in subsequent copies, were inserted in the text." If I am mistaken, the reader of Dr. M.'s work will decide; but if there are any better sources than Apostles and eye-witnesses, our Saviour has left the momentous and awful scenes of his death and resurrection to be recorded by persons ill qualified for the task, or we have not the best evidence of these facts; and our Saviour could not, as he declared, "bear witness of himself." These better sources would be likewise a singular discovery, even in this discovering age.

Dr. M. has not attributed to the Evangelist any extraordinary merit in saying that he introduced nothing but what was consistent with truth. To say that an inspired writer tells truth, is not the most extravagant flattery; nor is it the highest office of inspiration to prevent the insertion of falsehood, or to watch over a person who might ignorantly or wilfully relate it for truth, unless he was thus watched. I do not usually build arguments upon the significations of words, but I may remark, that the term ἀσφάλειαν does not relate to truth as opposed to

falsehood, but as certainty opposed to doubt; and St. Luke's Gospel appears to possess the advantage of truth combined with the authority of the writer. The accounts of the 'many' had truth on their side, but the writers appear to have wanted authority.

Dr. M. appears to have exposed Christianity to many serious objections, in his attempt to solve a few and unimportant difficulties, which do not affect its truth. I can believe the accounts of the Evangelists, upon the old grounds of belief; but if I did or could think that Dr. Marsh's hypothesis had any foundation whatever, I would not cull an extract or two from St. Luke with Marcion, but I would reject the entire histories of the Evangelists. I conclude with the sentiments, which I had, in fact, anticipated, of the author of the pamphlet to which I have referred—

"I admit, then, of a common document, but that document was no other than the preaching of our blessed
"Lord himself," p. 34.

NOTES

TO

THE PROBATIONARY DISCOURSE.

To many readers the following notes will appear tedious ; and by those who hold the opinions of Dr. Milner, they will be thought to be sufficiently brief. The argument indeed might have been included in a few deductions from the Trials of the Conspirators ; but I was willing to follow Dr. Milner through the strange confusion of history and hypothesis, of history perverted or misunderstood, and of hypothesis licentious and contradictory. There are occasions, when the enquiry might have abruptly concluded in the language of justifiable indignation ; yet, to an adversary, I might have appeared to conceal ignorance in contempt, while on the other hand expressions of respect, where none can be felt, argue an insincere or a timid opponent. I may observe, that, as the objections chiefly relate to facts, the subjoined reply frequently consists simply of a citation, and the reader himself is left in most cases to examine and to infer.

NOTE (A), p. 281.

THIS is an old accusation revived. It appears, but probably not for the first time, in the *Calendarium Catholicum*, published in the year 1662. See the Pref. to

the book entitled "The Gunpowder Treason," republished by Bp. Barlow in 1679. Dr. Milner says, "I have proved, that this was an express contrivance of the Secretary of State." p. 346. See also pp. 267, 271, 278, 283, 302, of "Letters to a Prebendary." 1807. "This account of the Powder Plot, which places it in so different a light from that in which Dr. S. with the generality of other writers exhibit it, this gentleman has not thought proper to contest in a single particular." p. 347. It is not my intention to permit an adversary to deduce a surrender from silence on any particulars which I have the means of examining.

I wish to apprise the reader, that I had not an opportunity of referring to Foulis's History of Romish Treasons, or to the works entitled "The Gunpowder Treason," and "The History of the Gunpowder Treason," till the Discourse was composed and delivered.

NOTE (B), p. 282.

Dr. Milner professes to collect various proofs of the friendly disposition of James towards the Catholics *at the time of his accession*, in order to shew how much his opinions were subsequently influenced by his minister Cecil. But it must be observed, that these proofs are taken from political circumstances of various dates.

1. The first is, the conference with the French Envoy, the Archbishop of Ambrun. The English Catholics had been treated with great severity by James, and had applied to the French Monarch to intercede in their favour. The King of France, apprehending that they might prevent the Pope from granting the dispensation necessary for the marriage of his daughter with a Protestant prince, dispatched the Archbishop of Ambrun as the mediator. Whatever sentiments James might express in this conference with the Archbishop, we may

reasonably refer to the same apprehension, which the King of France entertained respecting the obstruction of the marriage. At any rate, they admit the same interpretation as those articles, so highly favourable to the Catholics, which were inserted in the treaty of marriage itself, and they were explained in the following manner, when the Marquis de Blainville remonstrated, and demanded their execution. “ Mais qu’il plaise aussi au
 “ Roy Treschrestien, et à ses Ministres, de se ressouvenir
 “ que les plus obligeans et exactes termes et mots, compris es dictes articles, furent proposez de la part du
 “ Roy Treschrestien, seulement aux fins de donner au
 “ Pape telle satisfaction que la Dispensation s’en puit en-
 “ suivre.” Rymer, tom. xviii. p. 224. We must in the next place note that this conference took place in 1624!

2. The letter of James to Clement VIII. was a forgery of Sir Edward Drummond, cousin of the Secretary Elphinston Lord Balmerinoch, who was tried and condemned upon his own confession, and afterwards pardoned. He was not charged with this offence till the year 1608. “ The Secretary was brought before the
 “ council, and charged with the fault; which the Lords
 “ did aggravate in such manner, as they made the same
 “ to be the ground of all the conspiracies devised against
 “ the King since his coming into England, especially of
 “ the *Powder Treason*. For the Papists, said they, finding themselves disappointed of the hopes which that
 “ letter did give them, had taken the desperate course,
 “ which they followed to the endangering of his Majesty’s person, posterity, and whole estates.” P. 508. Spotswood. It appears however what James’s sentiments were at this period, when the letter was sent. “ The
 “ treatise” (Bellarmine’s, in which he charged James with inconstancy, objecting the letter to Clement) “ coming to the King’s hands, and he falling upon that pas-

“ sage did presently conceive that he had been abused by
 “ his Secretary, *which he remembered had moved on a*
“ time for such a letter.” P. 507. Spotswood. The Se-
 cretary in his confession said, “ As he wished God to be
 “ merciful to his soul in that great day, his Majesty was
 “ most falsely and wrongfully charged with the writing
 “ of that letter to the Pope, and *that he never could move*
“ him to consent thereto.” P. 511. Spotswood.

3. “ The Secretary of State, Cecil,” says Dr. Milner,
 “ repeatedly assured the Catholics, that the King would
 “ fulfil his promises of granting them liberty of con-
 “ science. He gave assurances of the same nature to the
 “ Spanish ambassador. The subsequent event shews, that
 “ his intention in thus raising their hopes was to provoke
 “ their indignation, when they should find themselves
 “ disappointed.” P. 265. I do not wish to press the au-
 thor in this obscure allusion to an historical fact; but I
 must enquire, when did Cecil give these assurances to the
 Spanish ambassador? I cannot discover on what other
 occasion than the projected marriage of Prince Henry
 with the Infanta, that he had any opportunity to intro-
 duce these assurances, in his conferences with the Spanish
 ambassador. “ Cecil Earl of Salisbury, the great state-
 “ man of that time, pursued and drove the matter to that
 “ point, that the Duke of Lerma finding no evasion, dis-
 “ claimed the being of a marriage treaty. Nevertheless
 “ the Spanish ambassador, to acquit himself to this state,
 “ and to clear his own honesty, at a full council pro-
 “ duced his commission, together with his letters of in-
 “ struction given under the Duke’s hand.” Rushworth,
 vol. i. p. 1. Cecil’s name is affixed to the treaty of peace
 concluded with Spain in 1604, but no mention is made
 of the Catholics in any of the articles. I cannot connect
 these assurances of Cecil respecting the Catholics with a
 “ subsequent event” peculiarly unfavourable to them,

without some violent derangement of the chronology of the history. Dr. M. is not therefore entitled to conclude in this manner his review of James's early opinions. "Such were the genuine sentiments and inclinations of this King, *particularly when he first succeeded to the English crown.*" P. 266. The person who raised the hopes of the Catholics was not Cecil, but the priest Watson. "Touching the first, (Watson,) no man can speak more soundly to the point than myself; for being sent into the prison by the King to charge him with this false alarm only two days before his death, and upon his soul to press him in the presence of God, and as he would answer it at another bar, to confess directly, whether at either or both these times he had access unto his Majesty at Edinborough, his Majesty did give him *any promise*, hope, or comfort of encouragement to Catholics concerning toleration; he did there protest, that he could never win one inch of ground, or draw the smallest comfort from the King in those degrees; nor further than that he would have them apprehend, that as he was a stranger to this state, so till he understood in all points how those matters stood, he would not promise favour any way. He did confess, that in very deed, to keep up the hearts of Catholics in love and duty to the King, he had imparted the King's words to many in a better tune and a higher kind of descant, than his book of plain song did direct."

"For this he craved pardon of the King in humble manner,—and seemed penitent as well for the horror of his crime, as for the falsehoods of his whisperings." State Trials, vol. i. p. 203.

NOTE (C), p. 289.

I shall in this place examine Dr. Milner's defence of

the Jesuits who were concerned in this conspiracy. Tesmond, or "Greenway," or Greenwell, as he is also called, "escaped abroad; but his case was exactly the same with that of F. Garnet, who suffered on this occasion, and was peculiarly hard. These men were both successively consulted as divines, and under conscientious secrecy, concerning the lawfulness of the plot, and they both strongly condemned it, intreating that infatuated wretch to lay aside the thought of it." P. 269. Note (1).

1. If Greenwell were first acquainted with the conspiracy by the confession of Catesby, he maintained afterwards more intercourse with the conspirators than can be reconciled with any original disapprobation of the design.

2. "They both strongly condemned it, intreating that infatuated wretch to lay aside the thought of it." Greenwell did not however condemn the plot, when it was a second time revealed to him in confidence by Catesby's man, Bates, who "went to confession to the said Tesmond the Jesuit, and in confession told him, that he was to conceal a very dangerous piece of work that his master Catesby, and Thomas Winter, had imparted unto him, and said he much feared the matter to be utterly unlawful, and therefore therein desired the counsel of the Jesuit, and revealed unto him the whole intent and purpose of blowing up the Parliament-house upon the first day of the assembly. But the Jesuit, being a confederate therein before, resolved and encouraged him in the action, and said that he should be secret in that which his master had imparted unto him, for that it was a good cause. Adding moreover, that it was not dangerous unto him, nor any offence to conceal it; and thereupon the Jesuit gave him absolution, and Bates received the sacrament of him in the company of his

“master Robert Catesby, and Thomas Winter.” State Trials, vol. i. p. 196.

3. Nor was Garnet informed of the conspiracy through the means of confession alone. “For the main plot, he confessed, that he was therewithal acquainted by Greenwell particularly; and that Greenwell came perplexed unto him to open something, which Mr. Catesby with divers others intended: to whom he said, he was contented to hear by him what it was, so as he would not be acknown to Mr. Catesby, or to any other, that he was made privy to it. Whereupon Father Greenwell told him the whole plot, and all the particulars thereof; with which he protested, that he was very much discontented, and could never sleep quietly afterwards, but sometimes prayed to God that it should not take effect.” State Trials, vol. i. p. 215. It is evident that the knowledge of the conspiracy was not communicated under the seal of confession to Garnet; “nay himself (Greenwell) *hath clearly delivered under his hand*, that the powder treason was told him (Garnet) not as a fault, but by way of consultation and advice.” Vol. i. p. 217. So little reason is there for Dr. Milner’s assertion, that “neither from the declarations of the conspirators, nor from his own at his trial or his execution, could any evidence be procured of his having any knowledge of the plot, except in the way of confession.” P. 273. note (1). The above declaration of Telfmond was cited at Garnet’s trial.

4. If Garnet condemned the plot to Catesby, and dissuaded him from the prosecution of it, he changed his opinion, for “*he had confessed to the Lords*, that he had offered sacrifice to God for stay of that plot, unless it were for the good of the Catholic cause.” State Trials, vol. i. p. 215. “Then Garnet began to use some speeches, that he was not consenting to the powder treason. Whereupon the Earl of Salisbury said, Mr. Garnet, give

“ me but one argument that you were not consenting to
 “ it, that can hold in any indifferent man’s ear or sense,
 “ besides your bare negative. But Garnet replied not.”
 State Trials, vol. i. p. 217.

5. “ Garnet, when he found that his arguments were
 “ ineffectual, by way of gaining time, and in the end
 “ defeating the villainy, begged of Catesby to send a
 “ messenger to consult the Pope concerning it; knowing
 “ well that the latter would never give his consent to so
 “ diabolical an undertaking.” Milner, p. 275. note (1).

“ The Earl of Salisbury replied to Garnet, I must now
 “ remember you, how little any of your answers can
 “ make for your purpose, when you would seek to co-
 “ lour your dealing with Baynham, by professing to write
 “ to Rome to procure a countermand of conspiracies,
 “ and yet you know when he took his journey towards
 “ Rome the blow must have been passed, before the time
 “ that he could have arrived to the Pope’s presence, (such
 “ being your haste and his zeal for any such prevention,)
 “ as it was about the 20th of our October, when he
 “ passed by Florence towards Rome. To which Garnet
 “ made no great answer and let it pass.” State Trials,
 vol. i. p. 215.

6. “ Father Garnet, whose guilt was supposed to be
 “ the deepest in this business, was not *indicted and exe-*
 “ *cuted for having taken any part in the treason*, but
 “ barely for having concealed his knowledge of it.”
 Milner, p. 273. The indictment is as follows: “ The
 “ said Henry Garnet, Oswald Tesmond, John Gerard and
 “ other Jesuits, did maliciously, falsely, and traitorously
 “ move and persuade as well the said Thomas Winter,
 “ &c. &c. That our Sovereign Lord the King, the No-
 “ bility, Clergy, and whole Commonalty of the Realm
 “ of England (Papists excepted) were heretics, and that
 “ all heretics were accursed and excommunicate, &c.

“ To which traitorous persuasions the said Thomas Winter, &c. traitorously did yield their assent, And that thereupon the said Henry Garnet (here follows the list of the Conspirators) traitorously amongst themselves did conclude and agree with gunpowder, as it were with one blast, suddenly, traitorously, and barbarously to blow up &c.”

7. It is said that he was “ severely and repeatedly tortured on the rack,” p. 273. and that “ to make him appear distracted at his trial, he was kept without sleep six nights and days previous to it.” Milner, p. 274. “ We are told by a late confident author of their own, that Garnet was kept waking six days and nights together, and that Hall was put to extreme torture for fifteen hours space together in the Tower.” Hist. Miss. Anglic. p. 315, 334. But a greater than he, (Thuanus) one of their own persuasion doth assure us, that “ the King to avoid calumny did purposely forbear any thing of that kind of rigour.” History of the Gunpowder Plot. This account is well supported by the State Trials. “ Of which impudent calumnies the state is so tender, as you do best know, Mr. Garnet, that since your apprehension, *even till this day*, you have been as christianly, as courteously, and as carefully used, as ever man could be of any quality, or any profession: yea, it may truly be said, that you have been as well attended for health or otherwise as a nurse-child. Is it true, or no? said the Earl (of Salisbury). *It is most true*, my Lord, said Garnet, I confess it.” State Trials, vol. i. p. 216. “ Let it not be forgotten, that this interlocution of your’s with Hall, overheard by others, appears to be digitus Dei: for thereby had the Lords some light and proof of matter against you, which must have been discovered otherwise by violence and coercion, a matter ordinary in other kingdoms, though now forborn here; but it is

“better as it is for the honour of the state.” “His Majesty and my Lords were well contented to draw all from you without racking, or any such bitter torments.” State Trials, vol. i. p. 216. I shall here close this examination with the testimony of Lord Stafford, the victim of faction, whose trial no one can read without the deepest sorrow, and scarcely without tears. “My Lords, I have heard very much of a thing that was named by these gentlemen of the House of Commons, and that very properly too, to wit, of the Gunpowder Treason. My Lords, I was not born then, but some years after I heard very much discourse about it, and very various reports; and I made a particular enquiry, perhaps more than any one person did else, both of my father, who was alive then, and my uncle, and others; and I am satisfied, and do clearly believe, by the evidence I have received, that that thing called the Gunpowder Treason was a wicked and horrid design (among the rest) of the Jesuits.” “Besides, my Lords, I was acquainted with one of them that was concerned in it, who had his pardon, and lived many years after. I discoursed with him about it, and he confessed it, and said he was sorry for it then; and I here declare to your Lordships, that I never heard any one of the Church of Rome speak a good word of it; it was so horrid a thing, that it cannot be expressed or excused.” State Trials, vol. ii. p. 620. We thus ascertain the reality of the plot, who were the authors of it, and what were the sentiments which it excited in the honest and worthy among the Catholics themselves.

NOTE (D), p. 289.

“I shall only observe to you, that after the discovery of this plot, the authors of it were not convinced of the evil, but sorry for the miscarriage of it. Sir Everard

“ Digby, *whose very original papers and letters are now in*
 “ *my hands*, after he was in prison and knew he must
 “ suffer, calls it the best cause; and was extremely trou-
 “ bled to hear it censured by Catholics and priests, con-
 “ trary to his expectation, for a great sin: ‘ Let me tell
 “ you,’ says he, ‘ what a grief it is to hear that so much
 “ condemned, which I did believe would have been other-
 “ wise thought of by Catholics.’ And yet he concludes
 “ that letter with these words: ‘ In how full joy should
 “ *I die*, if I could do any thing for the cause, which I
 “ love more than my life.’ And in another letter he
 “ says, ‘ he could have said something to have mitigated
 “ the odium of this business, as to that point of involving
 “ those of his own religion in the common ruin: ‘ I dare
 “ not,’ says he, ‘ take that course that I could, to make
 “ it appear less odious; for divers were to have been
 “ brought out of danger, who now would rather hurt
 “ than otherwise. I do not think there would have been
 “ three worth the saving, that should have been lost.’ And
 “ as to the rest, that were to have been swallowed up in
 “ that destruction, he seems not to have the least relenting
 “ in his mind about them. All doubts he seems to have
 “ looked upon as temptations; and entreats his friends,
 “ to pray for the pardoning of his not sufficient striving
 “ against temptations, since this business was undertaken.”
 Tillotson’s Sermon on the fifth of November, 1678.

I shall contrast this extract with one from Dr. Milner,
 Letter to a Prebendary, p. 268, 269. “ Amongst these
 “ (the fifteen persons accused) it does not appear, that
 “ more than seven individuals were acquainted with the
 “ worst part of it; the rest being only concerned in the
 “ scheme of an insurrection, *or barely* knowing it, as a
 “ conscientious secret, *which they used every means in their*
 “ *power to discourage and prevent.*” Of these seven, Sir
 Everard Digby is said by Dr. M. on the authority of

Stow's Continuat. and Patinson, "to have pleaded guilty
 "to his indictment, and to have suffered death with great
 "compunction; *declaring at the same time, that he was*
 "*not let into the whole foulness of the plot; which if he*
 "*had known, he would not have concealed it to gain the*
 "*whole world.*"

NOTE (E), p. 295.

We are to return to the evidence that Cecil was the principal person concerned in the invention and direction of this plot.

1. "Cecil did not carry on his schemes so secretly, but
 "that some of his own domestics got a general notion of
 "them. Accordingly, one of them advised a Catholic
 "friend of his, of the name of Buck, to be upon his
 "guard, as some great mischief was in the forge against
 "those of his religion. This was said two months before
 "the disclosure of the powder plot." Milner, p. 275. I
 can consider this merely as an indication of a want of
 other evidence, and shall not think it necessary to say
 more of it, than that "the general notion" of the do-
 mestic must have been more minute than Dr. Milner's
 hypothesis allows; which implies, that as some great
 mischief was in the forge, he must have described by its
 magnitude the Powder Plot; that although it was offen-
 sively directed against the Protestants, yet that his master
 was able to controul the actors in this conspiracy; that
 he did not intend that it should take effect, and that it
 was solely a pretext for some severe treatment of the Ca-
 tholics, and that therefore this person was to be upon his
 guard. If he referred to the Powder Plot in his advice,
 he must have known all this. These are two many par-
 ticulars to constitute "a general notion," whilst the cold-
 ness of the caution betrays the want of precise infor-
 mation. The fact is, he alluded to other circumstances.

2. "Certain it is, that *these reasons* have had equal weight with many intelligent Protestants, as with Catholics. One of them calls it 'a neat device of the Secretary.'" Osborne's Memoirs of James I. p. 275. I am of opinion that the writer here cited says no such thing. He is speaking of the discovery of the plot. "The discovery appeared no less admirable than the treason, to such as took the printed account for authentic, that a letter was sent to the Lord Morley, and from him to his Majesty, &c. A neat device of the Treasurer's to fetch him in, to whose estate, or person, if not both, he had a quarrel. He being very plentiful in such plots, writing a book, a little after, wherein to magnifie his zeal to religion and the state, he published a libel, where they threaten to kill him, with a well penn'd answer, both thought to smell of the same ink." Osborne's Memoirs of James I. vol. ii. p. 117.

3. The Earl of Salisbury is suspected of having written the letter to Lord Monteagle, because "he had been trained up by his father Lord Burghley and his colleagues in the arts of counterfeiting letters, and privately conveying them to Catholics, and of employing secret emissaries to draw them into dangerous practices;" and we are required to "observe that Babington was first drawn into the plot, for which he suffered, by such a letter delivered to him by an unknown person." Milner, p. 276. note 3.

1. The author of the letter to Lord Monteagle was concealed. 2. The hand writing was unknown. 3. Its purport was to declare the sudden approach of the catastrophe of a conspiracy, and does not seem to be calculated to ensnare others for this reason; that as the plot was so far advanced, it was implied, that a sufficient number of persons was already employed to execute it. 4. The author of the letter to Babington was the Queen of Scots,

5. It was written in a cypher familiar to Babington. 6. The object of it was to engage Babington to espouse her party, and to manage a private correspondence to advance her interests. 7. The two cases agree in this circumstance only, that the letters were delivered by an unknown person. 8. Babington ascribed, in his confession, the origin of his conspiracy not to the letter above mentioned, but to Ballard the priest. *State Trials*, vol. i. p. 106.

4. There still remains another supposition not less licentious than the rest, to try the patience without exercising the mind. "He (Tresham) was well acquainted with Cecil, and is known to have had some communications with him concerning the affairs of Catholics. Tresham was upon such terms with Cecil, that he had access to him at all hours, not only of the day, but also of the night. Goodman Bishop of Gloucester, quoted by Foulis in his *Popish Treasons*, expressly says, that Tresham wrote the letter to Lord Monteagle. If so, it cannot be questioned, who dictated it." Note to p. 278. As Dr. Milner assumes, that this obscure letter was of such a kind as to inveigle other Catholics to join the Conspirators, it is of importance to conjecture, who might have been the author of it. But how it was to produce this effect, is still more difficult to conceive. It is deficient in every characteristic of an invitatory nature. It neither allures, nor solicits, nor exhorts, nor convenes the votaries of Catholicism. If the object of Cecil were to "entangle" persons of that rank, as he might find it expedient," p. 279. this letter is a singular instance of a statesman having so far misunderstood the means of effecting this, as not to suggest any topic, which could influence the mind in that manner. This contrariety between the supposed object of the writer, and the letter itself, must, where we have no facts, satisfy an enquirer of the futility

of the hypothesis. That Cecil should delay the development of the plot that it might "run to full ripeness," and to see whether any other nobleman would receive similar advertisement, was conduct both prudent and natural; but to interpret Cecil's words, as if it were "to allow him time to send *fresh letters* to persons of that rank (whom most of all he wished to entangle) if he found it expedient," p. 279. is quite unnecessary, unless the "fresh letters" were very different from the specimen sent to Lord Monteagle.

5. "Trefham it seems died of poison," Dr. Milner says, "before any trial or examination of him took place." Wood's account is this; "He was taken and committed prisoner to the Tower of London, where he died of the strangury, say some, others, that he murdered himself: yet a venerable author tells us, that he being sick in the Tower, Dr. Will. Butler, the great Physician of Cambridge, coming to visit him as his fashion was, gave him a piece of very pure gold to put in his mouth; and upon taking out of that gold, Butler *said he was poisoned.*" Athen. Oxon. vol. i. p. 282.

Was it incumbent upon Cecil to procure Trefham to be poisoned, in order to conceal the author of the letter to Lord Monteagle?

NOTE (F), p. 298.

"I have also a sufficiently high opinion of the sincerity of the King of England in the profession, which he makes of the Catholic Religion, to induce me to believe he will employ all his authority to establish its free exercise, without it being necessary to excite him to it by a premature advance of money, and which ought not to be employed if the Parliament grant him the revenues enjoyed by the late King, and consent also to the establishment of the free exercise of our religion." P. 67. The

King to Barillon. Speaking of a certain sum of money,
 “ which I wish you to preserve only to be disposed of in
 “ the event of the King of England not being able to ob-
 “ tain from his Parliament a continuation of the revenues,
 “ or on his finding such obstacles to the establishment of
 “ the Catholic Religion, as may compel him to dissolve it,
 “ and employ his authority and arms to bring his subjects
 “ to reason.” P. 67, 68. The King to Barillon. “ He (the
 “ Earl of Sunderland) will in future enjoy a large share
 “ of his master’s confidence, should his union with your
 “ Majesty continue, and he persevere in his design of
 “ establishing the Catholic Religion.” P. 71. Barillon to
 the King. “ So that, after having given proofs of my zeal
 “ for *the re-establishment* of the Catholic Religion in
 “ England, and of my friendship towards this Prince, by
 “ the succours I am at this time transmitting to you, I
 “ may not, in the event of his entertaining sinister inten-
 “ tions, contribute further towards placing him in a con-
 “ dition to act contrary to whatever I could desire.”
 P. 84. Extract of a letter from the King to Barillon. “ As
 “ I find with pleasure, that the English Parliament con-
 “ tributes liberally to all his Majesty’s wants, and that he
 “ will meet with no obstacles to *the re-establishment* of
 “ the Catholic Religion, when he shall undertake it after
 “ the dispersion of the remains of the rebels; I have
 “ thought proper to recall the sums, which have been
 “ transmitted to you for the purpose of supporting, in
 “ case of need, the designs this prince might have in fa-
 “ vour of our religion.” P. 98. The King to Barillon.
 “ This minister (Lord Sunderland) said to me, ‘ I know
 “ not whether things are seen in France as they are here;
 “ but I defy any one, who views them closely, not to
 “ know, that the King my master has nothing more at
 “ heart, than a desire to establish the Catholic Reli-
 “ gion.’”

“ I see clearly the apprehension entertained by many
 “ people of a connection with France, and the efforts that
 “ will be made to weaken it : but no one will be able to
 “ do it, unless there be a wish for it in France : this is a
 “ matter upon which you must distinctly explain yourself,
 “ and shew that the King your master wishes sincerely to
 “ assist the King of England in permanently establishing
 “ the Roman Catholic Religion.” P. 104. Barillon to the
 King, and p. 106, 107, 114.

I would only remark, that much more than even an
 universal toleration was intimated by the expressions of
 the King to Barillon, who does not use the simple term
 establishment, but the re-establishment of the Catholic Re-
 ligion—*rétablissement de la Religion Catholique*. See
 p. 88, and 102. of the French Appendix. This word can-
 not be reduced to the meaning of a toleration of any ex-
 tent.

FINIS.

ERRATA AND CORRECTIONS.

- Page 153. line 19. *for* “ initiation” *read* “ imitation”
 Page 192. line. 10. *for* “ scriptural” *read* “ critical”
 Page 237. line 2. *dele* *from* “ and” *to* “ Christ.”
 Page 240. line 24. *dele* “ and irregular”
 Page 276. line 4. *for* “ fuis” *read* “ suis”
 Page 304. line 5. *dele* “ a”

